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# The Sale of Saint Thomas



# The Sale of Saint Thomas

*in Six Acts*

*by*

Lascelles Abercrombie

1931

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London: Martin Secker

NOTE

The first act of *The Sale of Saint Thomas* appeared, under that title, as a small pamphlet publisht by the author in 1911. The original intention is now completed by the addition of the acts here printed for the first time.

L. A.

TO  
ARTHUR RANSOME  
MY FRIEND



## *The Tradition*

When, for the gospelling of the world, the Apostles sorted the countries among themselves, the lot of India fell to Thomas. After some hesitations, he obeyed the lot, being shamed thereto by his Master, as is here set forth.

## *The Persons*

*Judas Thomas*, the Apostle.

*Abbanes*, a Ship's Captain.

*Gundaphorus*, King of India.

*Prince Gad*, his brother, the Treasurer.

*Mardes*, the King's Physician.

## *The Acts*

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I



## *An Arabian Port. A Quay, With Vessels Moored*

*Thomas.* To India ! Yea, here I may take ship ;

From here the courses go over the seas,  
Along which the intent prows wonderfully  
Nose like lean hounds, and track their journeys out,  
Making for harbours as some sleuth was laid  
For them to follow on their shifting road.  
Again I front my appointed ministry.—

But why the Indian lot to me ? Why mine  
Such fearful gospelling ? For the Lord knew  
What a frail soul he gave me, and a heart  
Lame and unlikely for the large events.—

And this is worse than Baghdad ! though that was  
A fearful brink of travel. But if the lots,  
That gave to me the Indian duty, were  
Shuffled by the unseen skill of heaven, surely  
That fear of mine in Baghdad was the same  
Marvellous Hand working again, to guard  
The landward gate of India from me. There  
I stood, waiting in the weak early dawn  
To start my journey ; the great caravan's  
Strange cattle with their snoring breaths made steam

Upon the air, and (as I thought) sadly  
The beasts at market-booths and awnings gay  
Of shops, the city's comfortable trade,  
Lookt, and then into months of plodding lookt.  
And swiftly on my brain there came a wind  
Of vision ; and I saw the road mapt out  
Along the desert with a chalk of bones ;  
I saw a famine and the Afghan greed  
Waiting for us, spears at our throats, all we  
Made women by our hunger ; and I saw  
Gigantic thirst grieving our mouths with dust,  
Scattering up against out breathing salt  
Of blown dried dung, until the aching taste  
Like fiery vinegar ate into our marrows ;  
And a sudden decay thicken'd all our bloods  
As rotten leaves in fall will baulk a stream ;  
Then my kill'd life the munct food of jackals.—  
The wind of vision died in my brain ; and lo,  
The jangling of the caravan's long gait  
Was small as the luting of a breeze in grass  
Upon my ears. Into the waiting thirst  
Camels and merchants all were gone, while I  
Had been in my amazement. Was this not  
A sign ? God with a vision tript me, lest  
Those tall fiends that ken for my approach  
In middle Asia, Thirst and his grisly band  
Of plagues, should with their brigand fingers stop  
His message in my mouth. Therefore I said,  
If India is the place where I must preach,  
I am to go by ship, not overland.

And here my ship is bertht. But worse, far worse  
Than Bagh-dad, is this roadstead : the brown sails,  
All the enginery of going on sea,  
The tackle and the rigging, tholes and sweeps,  
The prows built to put by the waves, the masts  
Stayed for a hurricane ; and lo, that line  
Of gilded water there ! the sun has drawn  
In a long narrow band of shining oil  
His light over the sea ; how evilly move  
Ripples along that golden skin !—the gleam  
Works like a muscular thing ! like the half-gorged  
Sleepy swallowing of a serpent's neck.  
The sea lives, surely ! My eyes swear to it ;  
And, like a murderous smile that glimpses through  
A villain's courtesy, that twitching dazzle  
Parts the kind mood of weather to bewray  
The feasted waters of the sea, stretcht out  
In lazy gluttony, expecting prey.  
How fearful is this trade of sailing ! Worse  
Than all land-evils is the water-way  
Before me now.—What, cowardice ? Nay, why  
Trouble myself with ugly words ? 'Tis prudence,  
And prudence is an admirable thing.  
Yet here's much cost,—these packages piled up,  
Ivory doubtless, emeralds, gums, and silks,  
All these they trust on shipboard ?—Ah, but I,  
I who have seen God, I to put myself  
Amid the heathen outrage of the sea  
In a deal-wood box ! It were plain folly.  
There is naught more precious in the world than I

I carry God in me, to give to men ;  
And when has the sea been friendly unto man ?  
Let it but guess my errand, it will call  
The dangers of the air to wreak upon me,  
Winds to juggle the puny boat and pinch  
The water into unbelievable creases.  
And shall my soul, and God in my soul, drown ?  
Or venture drowning ?—But no, no ; I am safe.  
Smooth as believing souls over their deaths  
And over agonies shall slide henceforth  
To God, so shall my way be blest amid  
The quiet crouching terrors of the sea,  
Like panthers when a fire weakens their hearts ;  
Ay, this huge sin of nature, the salt sea,  
Shall be afraid of me, and of the mind  
Within me, that with gesture, speech and eyes  
Of the Messiah flames. What element  
Dare snarl against my going, what incubus dare  
Remember to be fiendish, when I light  
My whole being with memory of Him ?  
The malice of the sea will slink from me,  
And the wind be harmless as a muzzled wolf ;  
For I am a torch, and the flame of me is God.  
*A Ship's Captain.* You are my man, my passenger ?  
*Thomas.* I am.

I go to India with you.

*Captain.* Well, I hope so.  
There's threatening in the weather. Have you a mind  
To hug your belly to the slanted deck,  
Like a louse on a whip-top, when the boat

Spins on an axle in the hissing gales ?

*Thomas.* Fear not. 'Tis likely indeed that storms are now  
Plotting against our voyage ; ay, no doubt  
The very bottom of the sea prepares  
To stand up mountainous or reach a limb  
Out of his night of water and huge shingles,  
That he and the waves may break our keel. Fear not ;  
Like those who manage horses, I've a word  
Will fasten up within their evil natures  
The meanings of the winds and waves and reefs.

*Captain.* You have a talisman ? I have one too ;  
I know not if the storms think much of it.  
I may be shark's meat yet. And would your spell  
Be daunting to a cuttle, think you now ?  
We had a bout with one on our way here ;  
It had green lidless eyes like lanterns, arms  
As many as the branches of a tree,  
But limber, and each one of them wise as a snake.  
It laid hold of our bulwarks, and with three  
Long knowing arms, slimy, and of a flesh  
So tough they'd fool a hatchet, searcht the ship,  
And stole out of the mid' of us all a man ;  
Yes, and he the proudest man upon the seas  
For the rare powerful talisman he'd got.  
And would yours have done better ?

*Thomas.* I am one

Not easily frightened. I'm for India.

You will not put me from my way with talk.

*Captain.* My heart, I never thought of frightening you. —  
Well, here's both tide and wind, and we may not start.

*Thomas.* Not start ? I pray you, do.

*Captain.* It's no use praying ;

I dare not. I've not half my cargo yet.

*Thomas.* What do you wait for, then ?

*Captain.* A carpenter.

*Thomas.* You are talking strangely.

*Captain.* But not idly.

I might as well broach all my blood at once

Here as I stand, as sail to India back

Without a carpenter on board ;—O strangely

Wise are our kings in the killing of men !

*Thomas.* But does your king then need a carpenter ?

*Captain.* Yes, for he dreamed a dream ; and like a man

Who, having eaten poison, and with all

Force of his life turned out the crazing drug,

Has only a weak and wrestled nature left

That gives in foolishly to some bad desire

A healthy man would laugh at ; so our king

Is left desiring by his venomous dream.

But, being a king, the whole land aches with him.

*Thomas.* What dream was that ?

*Captain.* A palace made of souls ;—

Ay, there's a folly for a man to dream !

He saw a palace covering all the land,

Big as the day itself, made of a stone

That answered with a better gleam than glass

To the sun's greeting, fashioned like the sound

Of laughter copied into shining shape :

So the king said. And with him in the dream

There was a voice that fleered upon the king :

“ This is the man who makes much of himself  
For filling the common eyes with palaces  
Gorgeously bragging out his royalty :  
Whereas he hath not one that seemeth not  
In work, in height, in posture on the ground,  
A hut, a peasant’s dingy shed, to mine.  
And all his excellent woods, metals, and stones,  
The things he’s filcht out of the earth’s old pockets  
And hoised up into walls and domes ; the gold,  
Ebony, agate stairs, wainscots of jade,  
The windows of jargoон, and heavenly lofts  
Of marble, all the stuff he takes to be wealth,  
Reckons like savage mud and wattle against  
The matter of my building.”—And the king,  
Gloating upon the white sheen of that palace,  
And weeping like a girl ashamed, required  
“ What is that stone ? ” And the voice answered him,  
“ Soul.” “ But in my palaces too,” said he,  
“ There should be soul built : I have driven nations,  
What with quarrying, what with craning, down  
To death, and sure their souls stay.in my work.”  
And, “ Mud and wattle ” sneered the voice again ;  
But added, “ In the west there is a man,  
A slave, a carpenter, whose heart has been  
Apprenticed to the skill that built my reign,  
This beauty ; and were he master of your gangs,  
He’d build you a palace that would look like mine.”—  
So now no ship may sail from India,  
Since the king’s scornful dream, unless it bring  
A carpenter among its homeward lading :

And carpenters are getting hard to find.

*Thomas.* And have none made for the king his desire?

*Captain.* Many have tried, with roasting living men

In queer huge kilns, and other sleights, to found

A glass of human souls; and others seek

With marvellous stone to please our desperate king.

Always at last their own tormented bodies

Delight the cruelty of the king's heart.

*Thomas.* Well, then, I hope you'll find your carpenter,

And soon. I would not that we wait too long;

I loathe a dallying journey.—I should suppose

We'd have good sailing at this season, now?

*Captain.* Why, you were looking, a few minutes gone,

For rare wild storms: I hope we'll have them too;

I want to see you work that talisman

You boast about: I've a great love for spells.

*Thomas.* Let it be storm or calm, so we be sailing.

I long have wisht to voyage into midsea,

To give my senses rest from wondering

On this perplexèd grammar of the land

Written in men and women, the strange trees,

Herbs, and those things so like to souls, the beasts.

My wilful senses will keep perilously

Employed with these my brain, and weary it

Still to be asking. But on the high seas

Such throng'd reality is left behind,—

Only vast air and water, and the hue

That always seems like special news of God.

Surely 'tis half way to eternity

To go where only size and color live;

And I could purify my mind from all  
Worldly amazement by imagining  
Beyond my senses into God's great Heaven,  
If I were in midsea. I have dreamed of this.  
Wondrous too, I think, to sail at night,  
While shoals of moonlight flickers dance beside,  
Like swimming glee of fishes scaled in gold,  
Curvettting in thwart bounds over the swell;  
The perceiving flesh, in bliss of such a beauty,  
Must sure feel fine as spiritual sight.—

Moods have been on me, too, when I would be  
Sailing recklessly through wild darkness, where  
Gigantic whispers of a harass'd sea  
Fill the whole world of air, and I stand up  
To breast the danger of the loosen'd sky,  
And feel my immortality like music,—  
Yea, I alone in the broken world, firm things  
All gone to monstrous flurry, knowing myself  
An indestructible word spoken by God.—  
This is a small, small boat ?

*Captain.* Small is nothing.  
A bucket will do, so it know how to ride  
Top upward: cleverness is the thing in boats.  
And I wish this were cleverer: she goes crank  
At times just when she should go sober most.  
But what? Boats are but girls for whimsies: men  
Must let them have their freaks.

Thomas. Have you good skill  
In seamanship?  
Captain. Well, I am not drowned yet,

Though I'm a grey man and have been at sea  
Longer than you've been walking. My old sight  
Can tell Mizar from Alcor still.

*Thomas.* Ay, so ;  
Doubtless you'll bring me safe to India.  
But being there—tell me now of the land :  
How use they strangers there ?

*Captain.* Queerly, sometimes.  
If the king's moody, and tired of feeling nerves  
Mildly made happy with soft jewel of silk,  
Odours and wines and slim lascivious girls,  
And yearns for sharper thrills to pierce his brain,  
He often finds a stranger handy then.

*Thomas.* Why, what do you mean ?

*Captain.* There was a merchant came  
To Travancore, and could not speak our talk ;  
And, it chanced, he was brought before the throne  
Just when the king was weary of sweet pleasures.  
So, to better his tongue, a rope was bent  
Beneath his oxters, up he was hauled, and fire  
Let singe the soles of his feet, until his legs  
Wriggled like frying eels ; then the king's dogs  
Were set to hunt the hirpling man. The king  
Laughed greatly and cried, " But give the dogs words  
they know,  
And they'll be tame." —Have you the Indian speech ?

*Thomas.* Not yet : it will be given me, I trust.

*Captain.* You'd best make sure of the gift. Another stranger  
Who swore he knew of better gods than ours,  
Seemed to the king troubled with fleas, and slaves

Were told to groom him smartly, which they did  
Thoroughly with steel combs, until at last  
They curried the living flesh from off his bones  
And stript his face of gristle, till he was  
Skull and half skeleton and yet alive.  
You're not for dealing in new gods?

Thomas.

## Not I.

Was the man killed?

Thomas.

Flies ? I hope India

Is not a fly-plagued land? I abhor flies.

*Captain.* You will see strange ones, for our Indian life  
Hath wonderful fierce breeding. Common earth  
With us quickens to buzzing flights of wings  
As readily as a week-old carcase here  
Thrown in a sunny marsh. Why, we have wasps  
That make your hornets seem like pretty midges ;  
And there be flies in India will drink  
Not only blood of bulls, tigers, and bears,  
But pierce the river-horses' creasy leather,  
Ay, worry crocodiles through their cuirasses  
And prick the metal fishes when they bask.  
You'll feel them soon, with beaks like sturdy pins,  
Treating their stinging thirsts with your best blood.  
A man can't walk a mile in India  
Without being the business of a throng'd  
And moving town of flies : they hawk at a man  
As bold as little eagles, and as wild.  
And, I suppose, only a fool will blame them.

Flies have the right to sink wells in our skin  
All as men to bore parcht earth for water.  
But I must do a job on board, and then  
Search the town afresh for a carpenter.

*Thomas (alone).* Ay, loose tongue, I know how thou art prompted.

Satan's cunning device thou art, to sap  
My heart with chatter'd fears. How easy it is  
For a stiff mind to hold itself upright  
Against the cords of devilish suggestion  
Tackled about it, though kept downward strained  
With sly, masterful winches made of fear.  
Yea, when the mind is warned what engines mean  
To ply it into grovelling, and thought set firm,  
The tugging strings fail like a cobweb-stuff.  
Not as in Bagh-dad is it with me now ;  
Nor canst thou, Satan, by a prating mouth  
Fell my tall purpose to a flatlong scorn.  
I can divide the check of God's own hand  
From tempting such as this : India is mine !—  
Ay, fiend, and if thou utter thy storming heart  
Into the ocean sea, as into mob  
A rebel utters turbulence and rage,  
And raise before my path swelling barriers  
Of hatred soul'd in water, yet will I strike  
My purpose, and God's purpose, clean through all  
The ridges of thy power. And I will show  
This mask that the devil wears, this old shipman,  
A thing to make his proud heart of evil  
Writhe like a trodden snake ; yea, he shall see

How godly faith can go upon the huge  
Fury of forces bursting out of law,  
Easily as a boy goes on windy grass.—  
O marvel ! that my little life of mind  
Can by mere thinking the unsizable  
Creature of sea enslave ! I must believe it.  
The mind hath many powers beyond name  
Deep womb'd within it, and can shoot strange vigors :  
Men there have been who could so grimly look  
That soldiers' hearts went out like candle flames  
Before their eyes, and the blood perisht in them.—  
But I—could I do that ? Would I not feel  
The power in me if 'twas there ? And yet  
'Twere a child's game to what I have to do,  
For days and days with sleepless faith oppress  
And terrorize the demon sea. I think  
A man might, as I saw my Master once,  
Pass unharmed through a storm of men, yet fail  
At this that lies before me : men are mind,  
And mind can conquer mind ; but how can it quell  
The unappointed purpose of great waters ?—

Well, say the sea is past : why, then I have  
My feet but on the threshold of my task,  
To gospel India,—my single heart  
To seize into the order of its beat  
All the strange blood of India, my brain  
To lord the dark thought of that tann'd mankind !—  
O, horrible those sweltry places are,  
Where the sun comes so close, it makes the earth  
Burn in a frenzy of breeding,—smoke and flame

Of lives burning up from agoniz'd loam !  
Those monstrous sappy jungles of clutcht growth,  
Enormous weed hugging enormous weed,  
What can such fearful increase have to do  
With prospering bounty ? A rage works in the ground,  
Incurably, like frantic lechery,  
Pouring its passion out in crops and spawns.  
'Tis as the mighty spirit of life, that here  
Walketh beautifully praising, glad of God,  
Should, stepping on the poison'd Indian shore,  
Breathing the Indian air of fire and steam,  
Fling herself into a craze of hideous dancing,  
The green gown whipping her swift limbs, all her body  
Writhen to speak inutterable desire,  
Tormented by a glee of hating God.  
Nay, it must be, to visit India,  
That frantic pomp and hurrying forth of life,  
As if a man should enter at unawares  
The dreaming mind of Satan, gorgeously  
Imagining his eternal hell of lust.—

They say the land is full of apes, which have  
Their own gods and worship ; how ghastly, this !—  
That demons (for it must be so) should build,  
In mockery of man's upward faith, the souls  
Of monkeys, those lewd mammets of mankind,  
Into a dreadful farce of adoration !  
And flies ! a land of flies ! where the hot soil  
Foul with ceaseless decay steams into flies !  
So thick they pile themselves in the air above  
•Their meal of filth, they seem like breathing heaps

Of formless life mounded upon the earth ;  
And buzzing always like the pipes and strings  
Of solemn music made for sorcerers.—  
I abhor flies,—to see them stare upon me  
Out of their little faces of gibbous eyes ;  
To feel the dry cool skin of their bodies alight  
Perching upon my lips !—O yea, a dream,  
A dream of impious obscene Satan, this  
Monstrous frenzy of life, the Indian being !  
And there are men in the dream ! What men are they ?  
I've heard, naught relishes their brains so much  
As to tie down a man and tease his flesh  
Infamously, until a hundred pains  
Hound the desiring life out of his body,  
Filling his nerves with such a fearful zest  
That the soul overstrained shatters beneath it.  
Must I preach God to these murderous hearts ?  
I would my lot had fallen to go and dare  
Death from the silent dealing of Northern cold !—  
O, but I would face all these Indian fears,  
The horror of the huge power of life,  
The beasts all fierce and venomous, the men  
With cruel souls, learnèd to invent pain,  
All these and more, if I had any hope  
That, braving them, Lord Christ prosper'd through me.  
If Christ desired India, he had sent  
The band of us, solder'd in one great purpose,  
To strike his message through those dark vast tribes.  
But one man !—O surely it is folly,  
And we misread the lot ! One man, to thrust,

Even though in his soul the lamp was kindled  
At God's own hands, one man's lit soul to thrust  
The immense Indian darkness out of the world !  
For human flesh there breeds as furiously  
As the green things and the cattle ; and it is all,  
All this enormity of measureless folk,  
Penn'd in a land so close to the devil's reign  
The very apes have faith in him.—No, no :  
Impetuous brains mistake the signs of God  
Too easily. God would not have me waste  
My zeal for him in this wild enterprise  
Of going alone to swarming India ;—one man,  
One mortal voice, to charm those myriad ears  
Away from the fiendish clamor of Indian gods,  
One man preaching the truth against the huge  
Bray of the gongs and horns of the Indian priests !  
A cup of wine poured in the sea were not  
More surely lost in the green and brackish depths,  
Than the fire and fragrance of my doctrine poured  
Into that multitudinous pond of men,  
India.—Shipman ! Master of the ship !—  
I have thought better of this journey ; now  
I find I am not meant to go.

*Captain.* Not meant?  
*Thomas.* I would say, I had forgotten Indian air  
Is full of fevers ; and my health is bad  
For holding out against fever.  
*Captain.* As you please.  
I keep your fare, though.  
*Thomas.* O, 'tis yours.—Good sailing !

*As he makes to depart, a Noble Stranger is seen approaching along the quay.*

*Captain.* Well, here's a marvel : 'tis a king, for sure !

'Twould take the taxes of a world to dress  
A man in that silken gold, and all those gems.  
What a flash the light makes of him ; nay, he burns ;  
And he's here on the quay all by himself,  
Not even a slave to fan him !—Man, you're ailing !  
You look like death ; is it the falling sickness ?  
Or has the mere thought of the Indian journey  
Made your marrow quail with a cold fever ?

*The Stranger (to the Captain).* You are the master of this ship ?

*Captain.* I am.

*Stranger.* This huddled man belongs to me : a slave  
Escaped my service.

*Captain.* Lord, I knew not that.  
But you are in good time.

*Stranger.* And was the slave  
For putting out with you ? Where are you bound ?  
*Captain.* To India. First he would sail, and then  
Again he would not. But, my Lord, I swear  
I never guesst he was a runaway.

*Stranger.* Well, he shall have his mind and go with you  
To India : a good slave he is, but bears  
A restless thought. He has slipt off before,  
And vexes me still to be watching him.  
We'll make a bargain of him.

*Captain.* I, my Lord ?  
I have no need of slaves : I am too poor.

*Stranger.* For twenty silver pieces he is yours.

*Captain.* That's cheap, if he has skill. Yes, there might be  
Profit in him at that. Has he a trade?

*Stranger.* He is a carpenter.

*Captain.* A carpenter!

Why, for a good one I'd give all my purse.

*Stranger.* No, twenty silver pieces is the price;  
Though 'tis a slave a king might joy to own.  
I've taught him to imagine palaces  
So high, and tower'd so nobly, they might seem  
The marvelling of a God-delighted heart  
Escaping into ecstasy; he knows,  
Moreover, of a stuff so rare it makes  
Smaragdus and the dragon-stone despised;  
And yet the quarries whereof he is wise  
Would yield enough to house the tribes of the world  
In palaces of beautiful shining work.

*Captain.* Lo there! why, that is it: the carpenter  
I am to bring is needed for to build  
The king's new palace.

*Stranger.* Yea? He is your man.

*Captain.* Come on, my man. I'll put your cunning heels  
Where they'll not budge more than a shuffled inch.  
My lord, if you'll bide with the rascal here,  
I'll get the irons ready. Here's your sum.—

*Stranger.* Now, Thomas, know thy sin. It was not fear;  
Easily may a man crouch down for fear,  
And yet rise up on firmer knees, and face  
The hailing storm of the world with graver courage.  
But prudence, prudence is the deadly sin,

And one that groweth deep into a life,  
With hardening roots that clutch about the breast.  
For this refuseth faith in the unknown powers  
Within man's nature ; shrewdly bringeth all  
Their inspiration of strange eagerness  
To a judgement bought by safe experience ;  
Narrows desire into the scope of thought.  
But it is written in the heart of man,  
Thou shalt no larger be than thy desire.  
Thou must not therefore stoop thy spirit's sight  
To pore only within the candle-gleam  
Of conscious wit and reasonable brain ;  
But search into the sacred darkness lying  
Outside thy knowledge of thyself, the vast  
Measureless fate, full of the power of stars,  
The outer noiseless heavens of thy soul.  
Keep thy desire closed in the room of light  
The labouring fires of thy mind have made,  
And thou shalt find the vision of thy spirit  
Pitifully dazzled to so shrunk a ken,  
There are no spacious puissances about it.  
But send desire often forth to scan  
The immense night which is thy greater soul ;  
Knowing the possible, see thou try beyond it  
Into impossible things, unlikely ends ;  
And thou shalt find thy knowledgeable desire  
Grow large as all the regions of thy soul,  
Whose firmament doth cover the whole of Being,  
And of created purpose reach the ends.



## II



## *On Shipboard*

Midsea, midnight :  
And a half-moon's light  
Insisting gently  
Through hazes of the lower air ;  
Uncertainly and faintly  
With a pearly glamour everywhere  
Sleeking the great black motion  
Of the perpetually marching ocean ;  
Touching with silvery grey  
Inquisitive delicacy  
The hissing ghost of spray  
The prow puts sturdily by  
In its bluff onward way ;  
And hard to say  
As in the region of a dream,  
If on the deck, under the steady sails  
That tower into disappearing height,  
Shadow it is that falls, or gleam :  
Gleam that like dusk of shadow veils,  
Or shadow that can blanch like light.

Into the colorless magic of this hour

Thomas (for leave his friendly master gave  
To roam the ship) came from below, and saw  
High on the poop, standing his watch alone,  
Abbanes like a shining apparition ;  
And in the misty sheen of pale bright air  
Round him, the shapes of things seemed to be slipping  
From off their secret spirits.—Was he alone ?  
Had they escaped already, the wanton spirits  
Hid in the staid familiar daylight shapes  
Of gear and furniture, timber and tackle ?  
Or were they imps that no allegiance owed  
To things, those darting small activities,  
Gleam in the shadow, shadow in the gleam,  
That round the captain on his quarterdeck  
Raced on the bulwarks, up the ropes and down,  
In and out of moonlight ? Thomas, his heart  
Beating a moment's shudder of chill'd blood,  
Went staring nearer, and heard the murmuring man  
Talk to his romping little visitors.

*Abbanes.* Quicker, quicker ! This is nothing !  
Stir, you scoundrels, stir !  
Be nimble now, you dropsical rogues,  
You scandalous paunches, stir !  
Why, in many a world the people  
Never can glimpse the god that owns 'em ;  
But solidly here, talking and visible,  
Stands your god—I who have launcht  
This sailing world for you, so that my rats,  
Safe in the midſt of unspeakable water,

May nest and multiply, happy and glutinous.  
And have I not set it in poles upright,  
Furnisht with cords and pieces of canvas,  
All for my rats when nights are pleasant  
To show their joy in a skeltering game ?  
Be nimble, then ! Declare it is good  
To be rats alive, so that I too  
Confess it is good to be god of the rats.  
Speed, you lethargies ! Make my heart dizzy !  
Follow-my-leader up to the peak,  
Tight-rope along the mainsail edge,  
Then round the truck and headlong down  
The haliards fling, and across the deck  
In a canter, and up to the peak again !  
Ay, now we are shifting : but quicker, quicker !

*Thomas.* Why, they are rats ! The rats of the ship broke  
loose,  
And the ship's captain taking his mood from them !—  
But it is all of a piece. Now I have plain  
The truth : the sign of it is given me now  
Past all mistake. I came up here in hope  
To send my thought out of my aching mind  
At large into a night of sea and stars :  
Out of the ceaseless wheeling of my mind  
To free the trampling thought that drives it round,  
Like slavery shut in a turning treadmill  
To trudge unending stairs and get no higher.  
And here's my freedom : this is the world for me !  
Night that is all a glimmering phantom of mist,

Crazing the look of things, and bringing out  
The shameless vermin in a gambolling dance.  
I know the sign ; and I must take its meaning :  
I am the one sane mind left reasoning  
Against the drift of a world of mischievous nonsense.  
And little good to reason ! There behold  
The genius of my affairs ! my owner,  
The man in charge of me and of my mission,  
Solemnly playing the jape of a fool  
In a squealing mutiny of the ship's rats !—  
But I will face it out ; I'll test it home,  
This lunatic fortune that has hold of me.

But soon as Thomas stept on the captain's deck  
The rats were all aloft—sharp as a man  
Can snap his fingers, their blithe scampering  
Familiarity around Abbanes  
Changed to a motionless and watchful pause ;  
And in the stillness of their clustering  
Along the yards and up the lines of rigging,  
Their lively bodies vanisht into shadow.  
But where the half-light in a sparkle caught  
The keen suspicion of their small round eyes,  
It filled the height of gear about the mast  
With glinting little jewels, green and red :  
Like a tall tree in fairyland, that bears  
Amid grey twilight of the forest there,  
In breathless secrecy of spectral leaves,  
Berries of emerald and carbuncle.  
But when they found Thomas meant nothing more

Than harmless talk, in twos and threes the rats  
Crept venturing down the ropes head-first ; and soon  
The pace of the game went round again full speed,  
With a shrill delight and a rustle of rapid paws  
On hemp or sailcloth, and across the planks  
A pattering gallop : merrily up from the deck  
They leapt into the cordage, and went wild  
Above the heads of the two talking men.

*Thomas.* Well, you keep pretty company up here.

*Abbanes.* Better than you will keep in India.

*Thomas.* That I believe. Mine were an easy gospel,  
If India would listen like your rats !

*Abbanes.* Ay, and a thriving one, if it would give  
Your Indians what my gospel gives my rats.

*Thomas.* So that's the drollery ! A gospel, is it ?  
Making a game of mine ?

*Abbanes.* What, none but you  
May have a gospel ?—O, the word is yours,  
But the thing's old with me. And as for games,  
You and your handsome master are the men :  
Fine game you made of me, selling me cheap  
A carpenter, and foisting on me—You !  
My turn will come, though, when I see you stand  
Gospelling India, dodging Indian dung  
And Indian stones ; and you'll remember then  
(As agony very often in a glance  
Of helpless envy looks back on things past)—  
You with your dry tongue tasting on your lips  
The salt of sweat and blood, while the crowd yells

Abominating you—you will remember  
How in the sleeping ship at white midnight,  
In vast quiet of midsea noise, you found  
Me at my gospel, and the swarm of glee  
Revelling in it.

*Thomas.*           A swarm of happy vermin !

*Abbanes.* Why not ? Rats are as good as men for this.

Look at them ! Tell me what more men could give  
Their gospeller than these ? and what have men  
Done to deserve a godsend more than rats ?—  
The mood comes on me ; and till I satisfy it,  
Nothing will do : I must be more than myself !  
So first I find the cat, and lock him up,  
(Ay, will your gospel do as much for men ?)  
Then take my watch. They know ! My rascals know  
What I have done for them ! And up they come  
Delighting as I bid them in the world  
I have made perfect for them ; and I stand here,  
Lord of their lives, who put the fiend in prison,  
And become their rejoicing : I become  
More than myself, yet more myself than ever,  
Joy of so many creatures being mine.—  
Why, it can't last : it's a wise gospeller  
Who knows how far to let his gospel go.  
I shipt a cargo of cheeses once—and all  
The rats in dock beside : they troopt on board  
In nations, and the hawsers the whole night  
Were simply highways—I and the gloating cat  
Enjoying it like a show, welcoming them  
Like hosts at a party. O, that cat of mine,

He was a murderer ! Never was there god,  
Not even yours, served by such a demon !  
And he went overboard ; the swing of the boom  
Caught him crack in a squall, and left the rats  
In paradise. And what was the end of that ?  
I lost my lading : it was the joke of the day  
For the whole port, but a dear joke for me,  
To watch the stevedores toss empty rinds,  
Eaten as hollow as tubs, on to the quays,  
Like strong professors when the fair is done  
Chucking aside the bulks that lookt like weight.  
And for the rats a good half of the voyage  
Was pining snarling famine. Think on that,  
In case, when the king's viewed your carpentry,  
What's left of you has still a mind for preaching :  
Gospels are things to live for, not live on !  
They make good holidays, but ruinous business.  
And high time now I gave my fasting fiend  
His morning massacre : it is long enough  
He has been hungering patiently in my cabin.  
You'll see him scout these raptures. And what then ?  
The rats have had their blissful hour, and I  
Am satisfied : I have been more than myself !

Thomas went forward moodily, and leant,  
Propt on his planted elbows, over the bows,  
Letting the sullen shoulder of his thought  
Consume perception—all the adorable gifts  
His senses offered him : nothing to him,  
That arching back from either side the prow

The snowy grace of cloven water flasht  
Like fables of the dolphin's milk, in falls  
Of liquid jewels, that continually  
Kindled in little flares of sapphire lightning ;  
Nor could his ears enchant him with the sound  
Of furrowed waves, the passion of his mood  
Was so intent on burning into thought.

“ All of a piece ! There's some unholy force  
Of madness streaming through the work of the world ;  
And I am caught in it, like a tired swimmer  
Towed coasting past his shore and out to sea  
By an invisible race of mighty water.  
First I am sent to India, I alone  
To gospel India : as likely a task  
As if a man should go among wild bees  
And bid them mind the stars. And that's not half :  
For to make sure I see myself a figure  
Impersonating an impossible story,  
I am shipt to India to serve a dream  
Some black-faced and black-minded majesty  
Ridiculously doats on there : shipt off  
Simply like an animal-dealer's bargain,  
To amuse this languid demon of a king  
With tricks of a performing man, as men  
Curiously teaze an intelligent beast  
To agonize for them in unheard-of antics.  
I am to build a palace made of souls !—  
A childish riddle, if the dream were mine :  
How plausible it sounds ! How nicely it seems

In my affairs to insinuate its meaning !  
But lunacy can be very plausible ;  
And there is always meaning in a dream,  
As one may read the patience of a lion  
In the crouching of a rock, or think a mountain  
Looks at the morning with the indignant face  
Of a giant's grievance, while a by-stander  
Finds no such thing. Not to please my fancy  
Am I to build the palace made of souls :  
But to divert the glooming of a king,  
The tedious perfection of whose power  
Has bred the spleen of a devil ; guess what absurd  
Infernal impulse of his Indian heart  
Fashioned that vision in his insane slumber—  
There is the crazy task I must go through  
Before I touch my destiny, and give  
The loathsome life of India my gospel :  
This brainless captain will make sure of that !  
He has no notion of losing money by me ;  
He'll carry out his deal, and gaily leave me  
Slaving to earn fantastical damnation :  
As good a joke to him as playing god  
To the ship's rats in their midnight giddy-go-round."

By this the moisture of the night had changed  
To golden haze like some corpuscular light ;  
And now thinn'd upward from the sea in long  
Smokes of vanishing gleam, and left clear air  
And open radiance of the setting moon,  
That in the golden hour of her departure

Glowed like the forging of a scimitar  
Between the shining water and a cloud  
Illustrious as the links of steel chain-mail  
Reflecting fire. But far aloft the stars,  
Like ancient tribes returning to their power  
After an alien empire's fall, once more  
In myriad crystals of white flame declared  
Their infinite miracle. Thomas, his mind  
Fast in its private consciousness of mood,  
Knew nothing of the altering of the night ;  
But bodily instinct noted it, and moved  
Unconscious vision ascertaining upward.  
Then the transition was in him. On him  
All that quiet splendor came descending ;  
The fabric of his thought from off his mind  
Shrivell'd and broke like brittle ash of paper ;  
And to each particle of heaven, to each  
Ray of them all, howe'er minutely keen,  
In nakedness of pure experience  
Sensitive as a nerve to something piercing,  
He was aware of himself in all his nature  
Gazing at that eternity of stars.  
And suddenly he was among them ; just as a boy,  
Watching the flight of martins to and fro,  
Almost before he knows himself in love  
With such a life, suddenly finds himself  
One with them, his their joy and his joy theirs,  
Unearthly ease gliding the air on wings :  
So into the society of stars  
The spirit of Thomas enter'd, sharing joy.

They showed him beauty : what was that but joy  
Their being knew translated into his ?  
Must not the joy his being knew be theirs ?  
Must it not be for them some lovely portion  
Of all the beauty in which they lived ?—For them ?  
Nay, for the sum of all things possible,  
For the whole world's eternal ecstasy  
Of mutual enjoyment ! But to be loved  
As beauty in this essence of the world,  
He must be spirit in love with the beauty of it :  
“ More than myself I must be, more than myself !—  
Who taught me that ? Abbanes, was it thou ?—  
More than myself I must be ? More than myself ?  
Ay, till the kingdom of heaven is within me,  
And the King in his kingdom is one with me !  
For by how much I can be more than myself,  
By so much am I more myself than ever ;  
And this can reach perfection : when I am  
The charity that includes all things in me,  
And knows that in the life all things enjoy  
I am included : and my delighted life  
Is my experience of the vast of things  
Delighting in experience of me :  
The fires above the air, and the air's motion,  
Clouds in it, and the noble art of birds,  
The voices and the curving plunge of water  
And its green glass of placid depth beneath,  
The lustrous poise and cruising of the fishes,  
The mineral earth, the growth of moss and forest,  
And the whole people of beasts and wilful men—

I of them all partaking, they of me :  
I in my place in the infinite company  
Of things whose life rejoices to be God ;  
Since life for all is what each gives to each,  
Which is the nature of God and the kingdom of heaven.  
I am the man for India now ! Let come  
What will now, I am spirit in love with it ;  
I give myself to everything, even to horror,  
Knowing that by the gift I change its feature  
As morning changes darkness into color ;  
And even that delirium, India,  
Will give me back my gift in spectacle  
Of beauty for the eyes of all my being :  
Multitudes in one shapely spire of light  
Transfigured to the love of my Beloved.

“ And now what else, now I belong to the world  
As the ship’s course according to the wind  
Strikes through the sea ? To India blows the wind !  
The event moves on, and on the event I ride :  
Not like a trader, scanning anxiously  
For landmarks, lest he miss his road and market ;  
But like an easy-going traveller  
Who knows the beast he rides can find its way.  
Nor anxious what to do nor how to think  
When in the foreign place I must dismount ;  
But doing what each moment in its chance  
Opens before me as the inviting thing,  
And thinking that in such a world as this  
That I have seen and understood tonight,  
Everything done will come to end in good,

Known or unknown to me ; for what is done  
Is done for ever, and must for ever live  
In the addition of the appointed thing  
It brings to the world's immortal life in God."



### III



## *The Slave-Shed*

Bargaining long since over and dealers gone,  
These wretches must await tomorrow's business ;  
Thomas among them, now indeed a slave  
And stall'd with slaves : fetter'd in safe-keeping  
While in the town Abbanes went about  
The likeliest way to manage with the king  
His risky trade and get it off his hands.  
And now the shed was closed and barred for the night.

The hot black misery of stifling air  
Stank in his throat, and made each breath he took  
Deliberate effort will'd against disgust.  
Dense as the water is where divers grope  
With nostrils pouring blood for deep-sea sponges,  
Silence was merciless pressure on his ears :  
Not noiseless ; many noises came and went  
Of shifting chains, despair that could not sleep,  
Despair that drowzed muttering and exclaiming :  
Each in that dark tunnel an accident  
Detacht, distinct, and futile as its cause—  
Slavery's movement of its shackled posture :  
Silence was still the law, a positive thing

Uninjured by the flight of casual sound.

So this was it ! Here it was now in fact !  
Thus had come true that fabulous India  
His brave imagination had so often  
Grandly and lovingly faced and commanded !  
This was his Indian ministry—to stand,  
Like any other slave, in his own filth,  
Or squat in it, manacled to a post !

But he was not abandon'd ; and not long  
In powerless dismay unmoved remained.  
For those high spiritual places still  
Stood mountainous about his mind, where once  
Imagination climbed to breathe great air ;  
Whence now to him, thus abject in resentment,  
Stirring power came down : as one may see,  
On days of thunderous calm among the hills,  
In a cliff-darken'd tarn the sultry water  
Suddenly move, as though some living strength  
Roused in the depth from ancient sleep and turned  
Its dragon bulk with an upheaving swirl :  
It is the passing of a lofty wind,  
That with a stooping stroke has thrill'd the water.  
So now, down upon this dull captive mind,  
From regions far above intelligence  
Swift unaccountable visitation smote  
Disturbance shuddering profoundly through it ;  
And, moved as though he felt some inner strength  
Bestir itself at need, and knowledge given

Not to be judged, accepting his misfortune  
Thomas stood up inspired, and prophesied  
In his own speech, aloud :

“Tormented by the world, the wise man said :  
A rock stands in the sea,  
And white the anger of water ceaselessly  
Thunders upon that stubborn head.  
And I heard the noise of the water say  
‘Not now, not now, but soon enough, ay, soon  
Thou shalt be worn away.’  
And I perceived the soul within the stone,  
And that it answered the corroding tide :  
‘Do all thou canst : have me in thy power :  
Destroy this body while it is thy hour.  
Shall I be injured, I undignified,  
Who am my soul, and in my soul  
Am God ?’—Whereat the whole  
Insult of the storming sea  
In one confounding cataract replied,  
‘What else, thou fool, thinkest thou I may be ?’ ”

At once the temper of things about him changed  
Even as the mood within. That horrible silence,  
Which could devour the life of any sound  
Like hunger of some demon beyond death  
Preying on helpless ghosts, fled from his brain  
And left no more than when a man awakes  
From nameless superstition in a dream ;  
And in its place, startling clear beside him,  
Taking his heart like a sweet cry of music,

The speech of his own people rang, the voice  
Of one surprised by joy, the voice of a girl :  
"Master ! my lord ! O they are Hebrew words !  
And surely the God of the Hebrews sends thee here ! "—  
And Thomas knew his ministry had begun.

And at once knew it challenged. Light had come :  
It stole upon him in his darkness there  
Like the intention of an enemy.  
He turned, and saw where, at the shed's far end,  
A lantern hollowed golden cavity  
In the black distance ; and presently could note  
The blur of glow through yellow panes of horn,  
And stalks of long thin light sprouting aloft  
Through piercings in the brass up to the rafters,  
Giving the moisture there a sparkling touch.  
It was the factor strolling on his rounds,  
Dangling his lantern overhead to spy  
Who talkt so boldly. Thomas, as he came near,  
Watcht, with the qualm of anger that accepts  
Vile truth from one abhorr'd, the glance of brightness  
Flash from the sweating attitude of slaves  
And shape their misery to gibing shadows.  
Now the man stood, and thrust his peering grin  
Out of the cone of dark the flame threw down :  
"What, are ye cheery ? And even in your chains  
Must ye be still sweethearting ?"—and to the girl  
He turned : "Is it a ticklish lass, I wonder ?"  
And struck her on the breast. Quick, as she fell  
In crouching anguish, clasping the hurt and crying,

The man swung round on Thomas, poising his weight  
For a jaw-breaking blow. But Thomas stared,  
The fetter'd slave, into that jeering face  
A man enraptured : in his ears the sound  
Of discord passing with a soaring change  
To clarion symphony, and before his eyes  
Rivers of flame, a blaze of every color  
That takes immortal joy in mortal sense :  
For like a moment of the power of God  
Anger exulted in him, anger became  
The forces of infinities of being  
Pouring into him fire and song to make  
The life in him one irresistible pleasure ;  
And this lookt forth upon the quailing man  
And killed his spirit. In a snail of shame,  
Squaring his daunted shoulders, he went off ;  
And Thomas could despise him, and exclaim  
" Go, and be carrion for the dogs to eat ! "—  
Priding himself as if an instrument  
Should boast of doing that for which 'twas used.

But at that malediction, even in her pain  
The girl's alarm cried warning : " O take care !  
Master, be careful ! In this haunted land  
Who knows what ghastly answer waits on words ? "—  
But Thomas did not heed ; the lofty mind  
Had fallen, and lay small and humble now  
In deep astonishment, of nothing else  
Sensible but of knowing in himself  
His Master's miracle.

Darkness again,  
And again a slave ; and now in worse disgrace  
Than ever, she who had hailed him man of God  
Whimpering beside him, suffering for his sake :  
Finely his ministry had begun with her !—  
And thought was wearying in the old round again :  
Enslaved, to send him gospelling India !  
Just when he should be bold ingenious freedom,  
All the disguises of persuasion trying  
From courteous reason to denouncing scorn,  
He must pretend a trade, and make it good  
Preposterously, or else be cruelty's  
Mangled and scorcht experiment !—But then  
He felt again out of his burning eyes  
Power look forth rejoicing, and again  
Saw the malignant face go blank with fright,  
And the man's menacing strength craze before him .  
Like a dry thicket charring in wind of fire.

“ Ay, if thou hast the will, thou hast the power :  
But durst thou have the will ? ”—To see who spoke  
Raising his head, Thomas that instant found  
Himself unmanacled, breathing open air,  
Alone in starlight with a naked man,  
A spectre of gaunt black stature, reading him  
Through and through with diamond-shining eyes :  
“ Art thou not he who said, I give myself  
To everything, even to horror ?—Come with me,  
And see what thou must love ; and first behold,  
There at thy feet, the life of India.”

For scarlet dawn had kindled while he spoke,  
And changed, as suddenly as when foundry-doors  
Clang open to let out the blinding steel,  
To the full shock of white-hot Indian day.  
One giddy stride the dazzled Thomas made,  
But halted in a scattering roar of flies ;  
And right before his way saw on the ground  
A corpse, a living corpse.

What man was this,  
This feast of maggots ? Whose life had it been,  
This seething flesh the life of India  
Was now so hideously immortalizing ?  
Not that pitiful ruffian whom the power  
Incalculable of anger had curst and bade  
“ Go and be carrion ” ?—And what grisly face  
The carcase stared with, Thomas moved his gaze  
Reluctantly to know. O well he knew,  
With heart that stumbled in its beat, that face !  
His own ! It was himself, the death that lay  
Indifferent there, breeding this filth of life !  
Which as he glared on it, in such a swell  
And writhing yeast of multiplying creatures  
Piled up and workt like boiling of thick broth,  
That with the motion of the crawling tumult  
His senses reeled, and darken’d to a dream  
Of every kind of life out of himself  
Issuing. It was utterance of himself,  
The steaming gloom of forest where he stood ;  
Out of himself the dreadful life went forth  
That filled it with the passion, the contrivance,

The patience, of unceasing ravenous instinct :  
The leeches in the sopping moss ; the flights  
Of keening midges ; spiders and scorpions  
Devising poison ; hornets for their grubs  
Collecting larders of live catalepsy,  
The chafers they with exquisitely crippling  
Science had stung ; smirking alligators  
Waiting at fords and bathing-shallows ; tigers  
With beautiful bloodthirsty faces questing  
Meat that deliciously of hunted fear  
Will relish as it tears. Then in a glade  
Hundreds of apes in howling ecstasy  
Adored the master ape, who loll'd enthroned,  
And nodded a sly recognition at him,  
Idolized monkey likeness of himself ;  
And as he past, each bestial devotee  
Gave him of his own eyes a sidelong leer.  
He fled, but only into viler dream.  
For now the life in him, that still went forth  
Shaping itself unquenchably, strove to make  
Minds that could understand and store their power,  
And feel their freedom, knowing they were ruled,  
And in the fate they knew they could not know,  
Worshipping and imagining, find their home :  
And like a soul lockt in an injured brain,  
Who hears the agony of its passion cry  
Only an idiot's noise detestably chattering,  
He saw these minds become the lives of men.  
O at length unendurable, to be  
This life of India ! all the beast in him

Was clean and kindly, matcht with all the man !  
What beast, unless corrupted to be man's,  
Could bear to live like men, habitual dirt,  
The stench of men in villages, who breathe  
Perpetual excrement ? What had he been  
Among the beasts like what he now must be,  
Now he was fly-blown babies, foul old men  
Abusing little girls, malignant crones,  
And hopeless famishing toil consoling itself  
By sanctifying cruelty and lust ?  
No end to this ? Must even marvellous mind  
Serve only to elaborate life's evil ?  
And never any end ?

And the end came  
Like snapping cord. At height of this despair  
A stroke of flashing change : and now he stood  
Releast, or in delighted bondage now,  
With all his life, all sense and thought and mood,  
Expecting something unbelievable  
Of joy. And there behold it ! There far off  
Visible sign of it shone ! where stately rock  
Clear above savage growth of jungle rose  
In noble mound, that on its summit bore  
Brightness as white as a descended star.  
Now he was nearer ; and the shining grew  
Discernible shape and posture—spires and walls  
Mounting in buttress mass and arching grace  
To tower supreme in vault and dome : and all  
Built of substantial lustre, marble flame ;  
So that the place was splendor where it stood,

And underneath it, every coign and ridge  
Of the grand basalt's black foundation gleamed  
Like quicksilver cascading, with continual  
Downpour of the light of it. Still it grew,  
Dilating till it seemed to fill the earth  
With beauty of that carven snowy fire ;  
And suddenly he perceived what stone it was  
That made such radiant masonry : all that wonder  
Of intricate towering fabric wrought in light  
Was living structure— infinite shining lives  
United in one shining symmetry :  
Which was himself ! Himself the palace now !  
And nothing else in all the world beside  
But thus to be himself—this heavenly joy  
To live innumerable lives in one  
Shapely perfection of community,  
And be himself the beauty all these made :  
Thus to be God, the king that all things are,  
And thus to be the kingdom, burning life  
Eternally suspended in its form  
Of flame's ascension into loveliness ;  
Or as if music should endure for ever  
In a divine conclusion.

The flame shook  
And rusht up past him, and the music soared  
Whistling higher and higher and shrill'd to a shriek ;  
And everything shatter'd : and he woke in chains.  
The piercing of the shriek was still in his brain,  
Though itself had ended, breaking at its height

Above wild shouting of some crowd of men.  
Then quiet: then more shouting; and the sound  
Was horrified anger now. Somebody flung  
The door of the slave-shed open, and grey dawn  
Came in with him: the man who brought the slaves  
Their mess in buckets, looking if he could find  
His fellow there, to startle him with his news.  
But the news was so big in him, it must  
Be told to someone, though it were only slaves:  
How a black leopard with a demon in him  
(Everyone said so who had seen his eyes;  
They smoulder'd even in daylight) round the houses  
Prowling, had caught the factor and cuff'd him dead  
And claw'd his bowels out, before with noise  
And stoning they could drive the beast away.  
Then, while they all were scaring off the panther,  
A horde of starving scavenger-dogs had come  
And torn the corpse to morsels.

Thomas heard  
This story with a heart that turned to water.  
Was it his doing?—"In this haunted land,  
Who knows what ghastly answer waits on words?"—  
How dreadful the girl's warning sounded now  
Across his mind's mechanical repetition,  
"Go and be carrion for the dogs to eat"!

The man at the door, before he could make the most  
Of the tale he brought, yell'd out, for a scavenger-dog,  
With its goblet fast in jealously snarling jaws,

Came scampering in between his straddling legs,  
Escaping from the chase outside. The brute  
Ran up the shed to find some corner safety  
Where it could gulp its meat ; and as it past  
Thomas, he saw its portion was a hand,  
A right hand ; and for the moment it went by,  
The glance of the scavenger-dog lookt up at him  
With a face that grinn'd the likeness of his own.

## IV



## *The King's Chamber*

Gundaphorus the King and Gad his brother,  
The treasurer, in private audience sat  
To hear this merchant's business. A brave face  
Abbanes told it with ; and often turned,  
As though to vouch the truth of it, half-round  
Where stood aside, a pace or two behind,  
Unmoved, erect, Thomas his merchandize.

*Abbanes.* Thus then it was : such is the brief of the matter ;  
. Thus the good care I took of your commands  
Good fortune found. I know not if the man  
Will do your business ; but here ends my part :  
Here is my carpenter. It is for you  
To see if he can fashion as you dreamt.  
Pay me a fair price now, and let me go.

*Gundaphorus.* Gad, what do you make of it ?  
*Gad.* O, rogue's patter !

It rigs no market here for dummy slaves.

*Gundaphorus.* There's something in this slave, though :  
he's the man

Of these two.—But would anyone ever have thought  
What an ingenious artist gossip is !  
A palace made of souls ! That would be better



And kings can be as practised in their craft  
As cobblers, brokers, handiworkers, thieves,  
In theirs.

*Gad.*            And gamblers. O I know the tale :  
The craft of kings is all in choosing men !  
Who questions that ? But as it works with you,  
I call it gambler's craft : no more than this,  
You guess, and take your luck, and try again.

*Gundaphorus.* No doubt it looks like that. So, when I  
chose

My treasurer, my luck was in ? For there  
Certainly I'll not need to try again  
While you, my brother, live to hoard for me  
And scold my spending. But why now suppose  
My luck has left me ?

*Gad.*            If you knew your brother,  
No luck in that. But here are vagabonds  
Nameless, unknown—

*Abbanes.*            Abbanes is my name,  
Well known in shipping ; and the slave is called  
Thomas : a Jew, he tells me.

*Gad.*            You tell me  
Your title to him ! Who was it sold him to you ?

*Abbanes.* All I can say, a very lordly person.  
If he were not a king, he lookt like one ;  
And things fit for a king, the person said,  
He'd taught the slave. Why, when he spoke of them,  
The air was full of domes and colonnades,  
Porphyry, alabaster, gilding and carving,  
Ivory and vermillion, lily-ponds and porticoes—

The slave has every dodge of palace-building  
Simply by heart.

*Gundaphorus.* I knew it ! I could see  
This was a man who had served great purposes.  
Ask him, Gad, if it's guesswork when a joiner,  
Sorting his planks, picks out the one just right  
For what he has to do, reading the wood  
As plainly as you read dockets and accounts.  
So I have eyes to read the grain of men,  
The seasoning and nature of their timber,  
And never need to question how I judge.  
I know my trade ; and thus I choose this man :  
He is my builder.

*Gad.* And nothing done or said  
To test the fellow ? Why, at this rate, all  
The scamps and sharpers up and down the world  
Have but to visit you in plausible pairs,  
Slaver and slave, and hold their pockets out :  
And I must fill them !

*Gundaphorus.* O we'll keep the merchant.  
Hold him in pawn until his ware is proved,  
And crucify him if it fails.

*Thomas.* No, no !  
Not that !

*Gad.* Ha, does that touch you ? Smelt the game,  
Have we ? I think we've smelt the game.

*Gundaphorus.* There's none.  
When I said that, it only was to throw  
A bone for that old mastiff, your suspicion,  
To grumble with, and stop his tiresome barking.

But I will please you ; I will test the slave.

*Gad.* Yes, and find out what skill he has in words !

*Gundaphorus.* My test shall be for something more than that.

The merchant might be anything : such frank eyes  
Have often knavery sitting in the dark  
Behind them. But the slave's like you, my brother :  
He'd never make a liar : that needs no test !  
"But something does.—Thomas, answer me this :  
Why dost thou think I need to build a palace ?  
I want no story now of thy craftsmanship :  
I think thou couldst not bear to face me thus  
If it were not something remarkable ;  
But 'ale enough of that will be thy work.  
Yet what thy skill is to thy mind, thy mind  
Must be to my design. Answer me, then :  
And never more, be sure, it were to thee  
That thy foundations lay solid and square,  
Than now to me thy answer : Why dost thou think  
I need to build a palace ?—For it is true  
I've sworn to build, be thou the man or no,  
What will amaze men's eyes ; true, I proclaimed  
That every traveller over sea should ask  
For notable craftsmen and persuade them hither,  
And chiefly those who knew unusual stone.  
For mine should be a palace that not merely  
Shapes in familiar gleam its great proportion  
Of beautiful reason delicately ornate ;  
It should seem made of some new kind of brightness :  
Marble that polishes silkier than the sheen

When sea-green barley bends its glistening hair  
In windy sunshine above blue-green stalks ;  
Or fiery crystal, as if molten glass  
Had cooled with all its crimson glory in it.—  
Be not too much concerned for this : I ask  
Nothing impossible ; all desire, I know,  
Imagines better than it can achieve.

*Abbanes.* Nay, but the man I bought him of was  
loud

About this very matter : some building stuff  
Extraordinary the slave knows how to use.

*Gundaphorus.* How to build palaces of souls, no doubt.

And, Thomas, here's my point. I can suppose  
The laughing-matter it has been for thee  
To hear this serious merchant-man believe  
I'd purchase thee to build of souls a palace.  
But we have had enough what gossip makes  
Of me and my desire : for this fool's pate,  
For talk of such a starling's tongue as this,  
I am a king who has dreamt a dream, and lets  
The magic of its nonsense rule his life  
Like an enchanted beast. But what am I  
To thee ?—And gravely now the answer hangs.  
How dost thou understand my mind's ambition  
To leave some beauty men have never thought of  
Decorating the light that looks on India ?  
Why dost thou think I need to build a palace ?  
I say, consider how thou wilt answer this.

*Thomas.* Long since this was considered ; and thus I  
answer.

*Abbanes.* Take care, Sir, for your brain's sake ! You have found

The thing he can do : many a moaning yawn

It has cost me to learn the man can preach.

I'm not to blame : you set him off, remember.

*Gundaphorus.* Is there no governing this talking sailor

Without we gag him ?—Now, Thomas, thy answer.

*Thomas.* When a man does a thing, what is it he does ?

That thing alone, which finishes and goes by,  
Or stands as mere achievement in the past ?

Nay, in this one thing done, the man becomes  
One of the doers of everything that shall be ;

For without this, what will be could not be,  
No more than next year's apples can be sweet

If this year's summer ripen not the wood :

Even as everything the whole world has been  
Enter'd into his deed, and there became  
Incarnate spirit fashioning the future.

For everything is One, out of itself

Itself continually creating new :

Not merely endless change, but increment

Perpetual of accumulated being ;

Since every act, once it is done, becomes

Immortal being, that out of our hands escapes

To add one more imperishable force

To the whole world's almighty will, like sounds

Of many instruments in fugue concerting

One everlasting music. And thus the world's

Divine reality, its will, goes on

Effecting its unending destiny  
Still to enrich itself with what it does,  
Still to create new being, which in turn  
Becomes creative, and yet still be One.  
No wonder then if such a destiny,  
Not by mechanic particles, but by souls,  
Atoms of self-will'd energy choosing their courses,  
Love to perform itself ; at every instant  
Narrowing itself to the deliberate act  
Of conscious spirit. But we, who are this spirit,  
Beings in whom the world's creative power  
Is consummate, free agents of its will,  
Know we are more than the divine world's purpose :  
We also are the marvellous power to know  
How marvellous it is that we should be,  
Nay, that there should be anything at all !  
Shall we not then do honour to our part  
In this adorable miracle ? Shall we not,  
Since we are made of such a noble nature  
That it can choose, be careful that our deeds  
Immortalize that which we most can love ?  
That which within us we can feel belongs  
To a world of mountains made, and magnificent  
sea  
And lovely grass and clouds and stars and morning ;  
And not to a world of misery and frustration,  
Injustice, idiocy, hunger and disease ?  
Ay, till we make the world's necessity  
Such an increasing strain of beauty still  
Creating beauty, that this fearful wonder

Of our existence and the world's become  
Wholly our lives' beloved paradise,  
Where satisfaction still renews desire  
That will be satisfied ; and so for ever.  
This, if we know ourselves, is in our power :  
If from our souls the action we send forth  
Like everliving water into the world,  
Move like the law of water—*infinite change*  
Of form and light and sound, but yet fulfilling  
Always the law its very nature gives,  
Whereby to move is to be beautiful.  
Such action to the world's eternity,  
With such a nature giving it deathless law,  
I think thou wouldst contribute : not merely so  
That for some centuries of mankind thy work  
Shall stand in admiration, but to be thus  
A part of what the plastic spirit of man  
At last shall make of its existence here,  
Transforming both itself and its condition  
Into the kingdom of beauty it desires.  
Were I thy slave, thus would I understand  
The palace thou wouldst have me build for thee.

*Gundaphorus.* And now thou art my slave ! Be mine thy  
skill,  
Even as the secrets of my will are thine !  
Then shall we do together, I believe,  
Something beyond example.—  
Gad, this is in your charge : I have found my man.  
*Gad.* Your man he is : he has it in his marrow,  
The way to flatter you.

*Gundaphorus.*                                    Must you for ever  
Mumble the old tune ? Listen : I know his art  
No more than you—

*Gad.*    O but I know his kind :  
Put him where flattery will serve his turn,  
He'll do it as instantly, as right to the spot,  
As a tickled dog will scratch.

*Gundaphorus.*                                    Listen, I say.  
Whether he is the man to build my vision  
How can I tell ? But he is the man to try :  
That is as bright as diamond. And if he fail,  
It shall not be for stinting of the means.  
I leave it in your charge. Would I could stay  
And watch his craft take hold of my intention,  
Making the stone of the earth imagine things  
Beyond the nature of earth !—But I must go.  
Short work, I hope, my war will be : but cured  
Once and for all of insurrection now  
Must be those starveling rebels that disturb us.  
They breed too fast ; there is no cure but slaughter.  
Meanwhile, my palace shall not wait on them.  
The site is chosen and cleared ; you have the money ;  
Let him begin. Let him use half the cash  
You have put by for this. Then, if I still  
Am fighting, and the slave's done half the work,  
Give him the rest to spend.

*Gad.*    But leagues away  
From here the site is ! I have no time to go  
Rambling back and forth studying swindlers,  
And very little mind.

*Gundaphorus.* No need ; your charge  
Is all in this : let not the work lack money.  
You'll groan, I know, as wretched as a man  
The surgeon handles ; but for all that the slave  
Must have your precious savings : out of your bags  
And boxes lavish on him all he needs !

*Gad.* Fortunate slave !

*Gundaphorus.* No one more fortunate :  
'The craftsman to the top of his desire  
Using his craft !

*Gad.* And what that craft may be,  
No one to question, not an eye to see,  
Unless some gang of his accomplices !  
Boosing, whoring, swaggering over the land  
In a parade of gilded elephants,  
Pelting roadside beggars to death with coins,—  
O yes, right to the top of his desire  
He can amuse whatever scandalous whimsy  
The mind of a slave can think of, to contrive  
The jovial squandering of unheard-of money  
Before he must decamp.

*Gundaphorus.* It is to me'  
The strangest thing, how men will stare each other  
Full in the face with open eyes, and see  
Nothing, because their minds are blind-folded.  
But it is no good talking : the thing stands ;  
I know this man.

*Gad.* In a quarter of an hour !

*Gundaphorus.* A quarter of a minute were enough  
For me to know and trust him : look at his brow !—

But I'm a fool. I might as well expect  
That ape of mine, because he holds his book  
As wisely as a doctor, can take in  
The mathematics with his nimble eyes.

*Gad.* The king must have his way. But you have  
given

Your word for one thing, and I'll hold you to it :  
I am to keep the merchant.

*Gundaphorus.* O keep him, keep him.

*Abbanes.* But I have business—

*Gad.* Very pressing business :  
To study what an art we make in India  
Of crucifying.

*Abbanes.* I withdraw the slave ;  
It has been all a mistake ; he's not for sale.

*Gundaphorus.* What, when I've bought him ? Now make  
no more noise

About it : take your price and away with you.

*Gad.* But in my keeping !

*Gundaphorus.* Anywhere out of this !

*Gad.* Why so dishearten'd ? You'll be paid your price—

*Abbanes.* It will come in for bribing of your jailer  
To give me a meal or two.

*Gad.* I should advise

Bribing the executioner : he's the man  
For you to keep good-natured. But the thing now  
To make a mark upon your mind is this :  
And let it mark like branding upon flesh !  
You will go palace-building both together,  
You and your friend the slave : you now no longer

The kindly owner, but my overlooker.  
See to it that he does good work ! Take care  
We get our money's worth ! or crucifying  
Will be the finish of your affairs. And mind you  
It will be Indian crucifying ! Come,  
And what that is, and how long we can keep  
Our criminals dying, you shall learn. Come on,  
And chat with my executioner a little.



V



## *The Camp*

The news was everywhere : the whole countryside  
Stirred like a broken ant-hill : nothing else  
But to make sure of this astonishing news  
All round about was thought of. But it was  
News of misery broken ; and not like ants  
That run, the frantic little energies,  
Exploring how their safety gapes, came in  
The troops of skeletons, creeping to learn  
If it were true, the unbelievable news :  
Famine no more, the starving children fed,  
Seed-corn dealt out to start the crops again,  
The money-lenders, usury and all,  
Paid, and the impossible taxes paid :  
The roof of misery over their liyes at last  
Broken, and decent daylight come again !

Creeping they swarmed, in families and droves,  
Whole villages, dauntlessly plodding in  
From far and wide across the glaring plain,  
The slow laborious haste of pithless limbs  
And reeling brains : but no more famishing now !  
The king (so the news said), the unjust king,  
Whose name had been the demon of their lives,  
Had sent a new man, with a mint of money,

To buy them food, and buy them out of debt :  
Undoing all his pillaging officers  
Had done to them for years : who thinks to ask  
Why kings do what they do, this way or that ?  
Right in those desolate acres, where long since  
Space for a palace of a city's girth  
The pitiless king had cleared with whips and fire  
Of men and habitation—suddenly now  
Turning to mercy, there the king set up  
His royal charity for all poor men.  
Let a man come there hungry, he should feast ;  
And beggary went home with wealth to spend.

Abbanes stood in the doorway of the tent,  
And wrinkled up his eyes, and into a line  
As thin as wire prest his lips together,  
Watching how Thomas, out in the dust and blaze,  
Came striding towards him cheerfully through the camp,  
Thrashing a bunch of leaves about his head  
To daunt the flies. "Ay, the important man ! "

Said gruff Abbanes, screwing his sour grimace :  
" The master now ! And well he knows I know it !  
" I never stopt to think, when I was a lad  
Out adder-hunting, how it might feel to be  
The squirming beast I had pinned down on the turf  
With my forkt stick firm on his throttled neck.  
I know that now : I'm in the forkt stick now,  
O fairly between the prongs ! That angry prince  
Has me on one side : ' You it was,' says Gad,  
' Sold us the slave, and you shall answer for it

How the king's money goes.' O, and it goes !  
It's going a rare pace ! This crack-brained Thomas  
Holds me on his side fast as Gad on the other :  
Nothing he'll do but roll out the king's cash  
In cheer for paupers, and to make the camp  
A kitchen that must hum and smoke all day  
Baking and barbecuing for half the world :  
If there's a lean man left in India,  
No fault of his, after this gormandizing.  
But not a show of building : stubborn for that !  
Not a day's wage he'll spend to start a trench  
Spade-deep, to look as if he meant to build !  
No, every penny the king gave must go  
In wagon-loads of food and paying cooks  
And doles of alms. Well, I can do nothing,  
Nothing but squirm between the two of them.  
The old adder's in the fork, pincht by the nape  
Tight down, till the time comes for back-breaking."

Thomas was near enough to hail him now.

*Thomas.* We're almost at the end.

*Abbanes.* What have you fed

All India full ?

*Thomas.* No, no : the money, I mean.

I've had it reckon'd against our expense.

It's running out ; we'll have to send for more.

*Abbanes.* You never will try that ?

*Thomas.* Why not ?

By this

Thomas was in the tent and at his ease ;

And pleasantly waved Abbanes to a stool :  
The master now ! Perfect command the king  
Had given him, and he took ; clear to be seen  
By shrewd Abbanes, as the worn man relaxt  
In blessed shadow after the burning air,  
The purpose in him never wearying,  
However it might toil his flesh and strain  
His spirit : to the end it would be served !

*Abbanes.* Your runner will betray you.

*Thomas.* But why should he ?  
For all he'll know, there's nothing to betray.  
I'm here the king's lieutenant. Who's to guess  
This work of mine is not his policy ?  
None of our people : I've seen well to that !—  
Why, there's a risk : the man may be a gabbler,  
And Gad may question. Still, it must be ventured,  
Or we'll be at a stop.

*Abbanes.* Nay, as for Gad  
You may be easy : I'm his security.

*Thomas.* Yes : and besides it's very like he'll sulk,  
Remembering how Gundaphorus put him down,  
And told me to his face to send my message  
When I must have more money. "The one thing is,"  
Gundaphorus said, "and I can promise you  
Gad shall mind it, let not the work delay."—  
Well, and it shall not ! We must keep on doing,  
And here's the thing to do. It must be tried.

*Abbanes.* O surely : lunatics must do their duty  
Like all the rest ; they are the only men

With the right wits to keep their crazes going ;  
Just as it's duty in a hog to root :  
He has the snout for it.

*Thomas.* Do you not even now  
See why my master sold me for a slave ?

*Abbanes.* I wish I did see that.

*Thomas.* To be a slave !  
He has sold me to his deputy, whose word  
Must now be good as his.

*Abbanes.* What, me ?

*Thomas.* The world :

I serve my lord the world : I am its slave ;  
I wait on its event from day to day,  
And take that as my lord's commanding nod  
Without a question—let it be sense to me  
Or nonsense, what the gesture bids me do :  
All's one to me.—Look how it all works out !  
You ship me here to build the king his palace ;  
And he—the nonsense of it, if I had tried  
To understand it !—swears I am his man,  
Welcomes me, sets me up in power and station :  
I who had thought to come to India  
As helpless as a ghost among live men,  
I am one of its masters ! I am to spend  
The king's exchequer—bullion in cart-loads  
My luggage when I journey !—What do I know  
Of palaces or building ? But I know  
When the sign's given, I know my lord's command  
I take the event ; what happens, is my will.  
So, guarded like a viceroy, off I go

Charged with more wealth than I had ever thought of ;  
And here, bewilder'd what to do with it,  
I come, and camp. And at once it blazes on me,  
The thing I am to do with the king's money :  
Kill the famine, feed these wretched people !—  
It is not what I meant to do. I saw  
Myself a priest, and India my altar,  
And all the souls of India ascending  
In one adoring flame up to my God,  
Directed by my worship, heavenly power  
In me mighty and manifest on earth.—  
But that's not it. The souls are not for me.  
I must be kind to bodies, well content  
To be the earth I am and serve the earth  
Men are, in this absurd and dreadful place  
Where into human flesh immortal mind  
Proliferates like frogs in putrid water  
Spawning the million units of their species.  
Yet when I think what to the mind in man  
I have in me to give !—that I, who now  
Feed starvelings plump, could make them such bright spirit  
That in the light of it even death would shine  
As friendly as a mirror gleams at a lamp  
Entering a dark room !

*Abbanes.* And now's the time !  
Kindle their minds and let them love to die :  
There are too many bodies in this country.  
*Thomas.* If it were my affair, there'd be an end  
Of body and mind together,—men and things !  
Anyone, anything, any sort of world

Existing is preposterous to me—  
O insupportably unnecessary !  
But it is not my world : I am the slave  
Belonging to it—and we all know how slaves  
Jeer in their hearts at the master they obey !  
This is my master—a world of dying flesh  
Whose passion is to live : and I must serve it.  
*Abbanes.* So, after all your talk, we say goodbye  
To gospelling India.

*Thomas.*                   Gospel enough,  
For men who have been chewing clay, is food.  
Men ? They're not men : they are not even beasts,  
That come horribly ingratiating  
Round me with ravenously beseeching eyes  
And lips green with the froth of eaten grass,  
Whose joints stare in their pining limbs like knots  
In wither'd hemlocks, and their ribs like baskets :  
It is to be this, life was put in the world !—  
But leave that out. For a little while at least  
I can make of these creatures wholesome men ;  
A little while the fiend that lives in things,  
Misfortune, from this piece of India  
I can shut out—my gospel now for men  
Your gospel to the rats ! It is not you  
Should scorn it.

*Abbanes.*                   I scorn nothing in all this world  
But being crucified.

*Thomas.*                   Why, no one knows  
Where what he does will end ; and very often  
It circles round to come home where it started

As good as it went out ; like on our journey  
We heard in that hill-town the evening gongs  
Sounding up to the heights, and far aloft  
The ringing among woods and rocks prolong'd,  
To fall at last in a delicious chime  
Back on the listening priest who struck the bronze.  
We have done good turns, both of us : you to your rats,  
I to my Indians. Wait and be quiet ;  
And something, may be, will come back to us.

*Abbanes.* I'm sure it will—swoop on our heads, and soon,  
It will come tumbling back on us, what you are doing :  
More like that dangerous morning in the gorge  
After we left your village of sweet gongs,  
When gingerly we stept and fearfully whispering  
Under the leaning scarp of ruin'd mountain,  
Where a man's voice in avalanche of stones  
Returns on him to brain him : will you not think  
At last, that like foolhardy shouting there  
You are shaking down on us death ?—and the sort of death  
That will amuse an Indian king !

*Thomas.* And why  
Think of it ? If it must come, then let it come,  
And be the worst it can : I will not help it.  
But these must live, and I can give them life :  
That is the plain thing here.

*Abbanes.* And what to you  
Are hordes of useless misery like these people ?  
*Thomas.* Everything to me ! Now like a goad of light  
When the sun pierces mist in a deep valley,  
That question looks into my inmost mind !

I have it radiant now : everything to me  
These wretches are ! What is it I give them  
To match what they give me ? To be myself  
They give me, which without them I cannot be ;  
And a world in which to be they give me : else  
As helpless as the fluttering of a moth  
That clings against a pane of lamplit glass,  
I were a spectre out in the night, in vain  
Haunting the golden windows of this palace,  
Man's experience : wherein royally now,  
Quiet and luminous and secure at last,  
I can possess myself and a world my own,  
And wait for what's to come. How dark it is  
Outside, I know ; but this I know as well,  
That I am most myself in what I do,  
And more than myself : again it is your word !  
To serve these people is to be myself  
And to transcend myself. Beyond me it goes  
Into the darkness, what I do for them.  
But if this marvellous thing be given to man,  
That he can freely think of what to do  
And do it—shall he not put his trust in this ?  
May it not be that some day there will come,  
Where there is darkness now, transparency ?  
And I shall see to what a magnitude  
My act dilates beyond me—to the size  
Of my desire I shall enlarge my being !  
And this obedience to my lord the world,  
My owner now, I shall perceive has been  
The word of God—and I the speech of it !

I have had signs of this. And will there be  
No change in me?—With what insane disgust  
I loathed this breeding India! It was  
Myself I loathed, and no more knew it than  
A felon knows how foully in his jail  
He stifled, till he taste fresh air again.  
But surely what a man, in spite of death,  
Serves, he must love; and if he love the service,  
Must it not be the servant he will love,  
Himself at last? If I could love myself!  
Can you conceive what it would be, Abbanes,  
To dwell in such a wonder? Why, it would be  
To make this earthly mind a place like heaven!—  
But who can tell his dreams? They only live  
In whom they are. Even for the thought of this  
There's no intelligence possible in words,  
No more than for the coming of the morning  
Upon the snows of Lebanon, that all night  
Between the forests and the stars have held  
Aloft their expectation.—But let come  
What will to me; the kingdom of heaven will come,  
Whether my work or not: God sees to that.  
Mine is to do whatever needs my hand,  
And look no further.

*Abbanes.* Well, my wants are simple.  
Let the kingdom of India meddle with me  
No more than I will with the kingdom of heaven,  
And I'll be satisfied. All I ask is this—  
Not to be three days dying on a cross.

VI



## *The Palace*

O now, now at last ! Incredibly now  
Every nerve in him knew it was coming at last,  
That moment of magnificence for which  
All his life had been instinctive longing :  
The justifying moment, the perfection  
Life can never imagine, never can cease  
Expecting—that unspeakable moment when  
Enchanted transformation comes revealing  
Beauty and order in man's bewilder'd effort,  
A divine pattern in confused disgrace :  
For Thomas now, lost in this huge India,  
The moment which would touch, like a wizard's wand  
Giving a scrambling blindworm wings, his desperate  
Small attempt to do his Master's work :  
Now it was coming, the magnificent moment,  
Now, incredibly now ! What it would be  
Was blank as ever ; but its tremendous coming  
Now he could feel as plainly as when a man  
Hears in the air above him louder and louder  
The shrill resounding whisper of the speed  
Of a flock of birds, although what birds they are,  
So high their dazzling flight, he cannot tell.

He must be alone for this. Out of the camp  
He stole before the light could cast a shadow ;  
And by the time morning had soakt the ground  
With fire, so that the air that lay on it  
Quiver'd like colorless flame busily mounting,  
Alone with fragrant pines and scorching rocks  
He stood, where the hills thrust upon the plain  
Their first abrupt of promontory height :  
And of his journey thither knew no more  
Than when a dream changes the place of its story.

And see ! the warning had come just in time !  
Barely he had escaped ! For looking down,  
Behold the camp surrounded—steel and brass  
Of sparkling *infantry* in circular  
Manœuvre closing in, and, scouting round,  
Skirmishes of cavalry : and already  
The pitching of some notable commander's  
Spacious quarters, a great four-square tent  
Of gorgeous linen glowing mulberry-purple  
On the grey ground ; and the tall corner-poles,  
Alight with leaf of gold, were spikes of fire.

Easily guesst what this might mean ! At last  
His doings had been heard of : and the prince,  
The jealous treasurer, Gad—O in his mind  
Thomas could see the picture of the man,  
His pleased and bitter angel !—Gad himself  
Had come with soldiery to take the squanderer.

He laugh a little : " Well, they have misst me !  
But they have caught Abbanes." And at once  
His mood ignored the matter—everything  
His mood ignored but how to make itself  
The equal of the moment it awaited ;  
For not unless his spirit upward strove  
Far above earth as down from heaven stoopt  
The marvellous promise, could the twain unite  
In blissful mystery of experience,  
His soul receive the event, the event his soul.

But when the daylight cooled, the twain were one.  
Now inconceivably content and quiet  
He let his careless survey scan the plain  
Once more.—What ! the King too had come ?  
Not only Gad, Gundaphorus in the camp !  
For from the north, the dust of a great army,  
The trampling of ten thousand horse and foot,  
Elephants and artillery, baggage and wagons,  
Traversed the evening, holding the ruddy light  
Like rolling smoke of a torch, and across the plain  
Crawling enormous like the ghost of a dragon.

So this was why so clearly he had known  
The coming of the moment ! Death was coming :  
For what he saw beneath him on the plain  
Was death for him, unmistakable death ;  
And when a soul, in its profound foreboding,  
Is sensitive of death, then it puts forth  
Its rarest, delicatest faculty

For life. Thus, as if one should feel the air  
Shiver with far-off motion, he had felt  
The heavenly moment's coming breathe on him  
A stir of spiritual element ;  
And thus no sooner had the moment come  
And caught him up, like the prey of an eagle,  
Into the loftiest brightness life can know,  
Than there must be an end of life for him.

And justly : for such feasted life as his  
What reckoning could pay but life itself ?—  
The reckoning must be paid ; but first the feast  
Shall be enjoyed !

“ Not yet will I go down.  
This hour is mine ; I claim it mine by right ;  
Then let the world claim what it likes of me !—  
And I could never have believed  
How small an apparition death  
Looks from the height of such an hour as this !  
“ I cannot understand it. Have I not failed ?  
What have I done of all I meant to do ?  
Nothing, I have done nothing :  
And with this infinite joy I am rewarded !

“ Was I sent here for this ? Was it for this  
I gave myself to India, renounced  
My dignity, my reasoning will,  
And to the chances of the world  
Absolute slave became ;  
Whatever pressure they might urge on me  
Accepting as my motive, knowing myself

The hand that must obey the thought,  
And the inscrutable world the thought  
That cannot but express the will of God ?  
Not to serve my Master's gospel,  
Not to make India, as I supposed,  
A province of his power upon earth ;  
But simply of myself, of my own being,  
Marvellously to make  
This infinite of joy,  
That centred here in personal delight  
Glories beyond dimension.

“ How can I understand it ? And what need ?  
Nothing remains but to be what I am  
Now, in this present hour :  
Nothing is left for me to think or do,  
Nothing to wonder,  
Nothing but blissfully to live  
Over and over again my heavenly moment ;  
In fiery consciousness that clasps itself ..  
Round and round like coiling of a snake  
In complicated circles of delight,  
To know and know and utterly to know,  
Here in my soul,  
Here in this infinitesimal point of being,  
Life that says, life that on earth can say,  
‘ I am the Kingdom of Heaven.’—In front of that,  
Death is nothing, all the world is nothing.”

Meanwhile, down on the plain, the darkening hour  
Had filled the great pavilion of the prince

With gloom, and changed its purple royalty  
To blackening sombreness. Nobody there  
Of torches thought, though it was torchlight-time.  
The grave attendants, who all afternoon  
Cautious of any noise had moved, and spoke  
By signs or in curt murmurs, now quite still  
And silent stood, as men will do who feel  
The affairs to which their lives belong at last  
Pause before catastrophe. Thus absorbed,  
They watcht, amid the twilight of the tent,  
Heart-sick Gundaphorus talk with Gad's physician.

*Gundaphorus.* But still, he lives.

*Physician.* It may be said, he breathes

*Gundaphorus.* Then, if he breathes, some pier  
cordial

May reach his spirit and rouse it from its swoon.

*Physician.* Only because I have seen, holding the murr  
Close to his lips, cloud on the lucid steel

The faint white shadow of the soil of vapor—

Only by that I know breath issues from him.

It is the last of life in him—if the name

For lying senseless, mindless, motionless,

Be life. Call it not life, for fear that word

Deceive you into hope. The name for this

Is dying.

*Gundaphorus.* Yes, if you let him die, it is !

Try everything again—your drugs, your fumes,

Your chafing—all the experiment of your art :

He must not die !

Then Mardes the physician brought the king  
Beside that bed where the white linen lay  
Moulded to effigy of the ailing man  
As stark and still as statuary marble ;  
And faced him with the ruthless honesty  
Of skill defeated.

physician. • No more authority  
Has my art here than you with all your love.  
Look, from the stalk of a dove's breast-feather  
I nip the plume of down that closest grew  
To the bird's heart, and tenderest to its warmth :  
Such filigree of membrane that the mind  
Cannot but fall in love with it—so light  
The touch of it is nothing ; it feels no more  
Upon my palm than the insensible air.  
Bend down, now ; look—there is just light enough—  
• Look close—but carefully ! the smallest wind  
Of the motion of a sleeve would send it flying.  
I lay it right across his lips : and see  
Now what his breathing is ! There's no force here  
Even to rock this flimsy curl of a thing,  
No, nor to make one tendril hair of it quiver.  
Just so my skilfullest fingerling can find  
Not the least trembling thread of moving blood,  
Though still his flesh is warm with it.—Torches ! Quick,  
Bring torches ! Why are we fumbling in the dark ?  
He is not warm ! His skin is cold as metal !

Imperceptible in the dusk had been  
The fatal alteration. But when flames

Hurried about the bed, and light was glaring,  
The strange and fortunate tranquillity  
Of the face of a dead man rebuked the stare  
And vain officious thronging of alarm.

A little while, before his vengeance turned  
Grimly on the physician, the king stood  
In musing sorrow over the face he loved—  
O lovable beyond all bearing, now  
Life had been cleansed from it like imperfection !

*Gundaphorus.* My brother ! Bitterly now I understand  
How wonderful the meaning of that word :  
My grief for ever now its loveliness !  
Wilt thou forget me, where thou art gone ?—But I  
Have nothing left but to remember thee.  
—Why did he die ? Why did you let him die ?  
What was this malady you could not cure ?  
If I should say, your talkative ignorance  
Killed him, what would you answer ?

*Physician.* That he was killed  
By you.

*Gundaphorus.* Do you think senseless impudence  
Will do you any good ?

But Mardes knew,  
The wary man, how dangerously he stood :  
He must be heard ; and very well he knew  
Injustice only listens to injustice,  
Only can hear, above her own harsh voice,  
A voice as harsh again.

*Physician.*

Am I to blame

That Gad lies dead because the world he served  
Dealt him a mortifying wound ? I tell you,  
If you must have a culprit for his death,  
Look to yourself : on you the sentence falls.

*Gundaphorus.* You say again, I killed him ?

*Physician.* \*

If you say

My negligence was his death. Suppose it thus :  
• A man climbing a mountain kicks from its poise  
A boulder ; down in the valley far below  
The last hazardous bound of its plunging strikes  
A passenger there. Dying there, I find him ;  
I tend him all I can. And then suppose  
My mountaineer comes striding down and cries  
' Why did you let him die ? ' should I not answer  
' Why did you kill him ? '

*Gundaphorus.*

O be plain with me :

What have I done ?

*Physician.*

Why did you turn aside

Hither your homeward march ? Answer me that,  
And you are answer'd why you found your brother  
Broken-hearted.

*Gundaphorus.*

No ! You do not mean

My palace ?—O that unforgivable Jew !  
I had forgotten. But is it possible  
This could be such an injury ?

*Physician.*

There are men

Whose passion still to serve the lives they love  
Gathers their forces like a burning-glass.  
Gad was of these. As if the whole of his spirit

Lived in a single glowing point collected,  
The man was one ambition : to amass  
Whatever could be lopt by tribute, tax  
And tithe could whittle, impost and excise  
Could pare and scrape, all in one grand treasure,  
For you to build the palace of the world.  
You took it from him ; to a slave you gave it,  
A promising slave. Where will you look for it now,  
That wealth which Gad made it his life to give you ?  
Where will you look for dust the wind has taken ?  
No injury, this ?—And gangrene in the wound  
To think of you, you his beloved brother,  
Cheated and shamed, the talk and scoff of nations.

Gundaphorus had it now : it came on him  
Like a wild beast escaping from a cage,  
What he had done.

*Gundaphorus.* Then it was I who killed him !—  
All this while I have had that in my mind ;  
But it was down so deep, and loathed itself  
So horribly, it could not bear to leave  
Its darkness, and be thought. Yes ; I killed him.  
We loved each other—and there is no love  
In all the world like the love of brothers—  
And I have killed him.—What eager haste I made,  
Still in the splendid mood of my campaign  
Against half-hearted rebels, to see my pride  
Complete, my power upon men fulfilled,  
My palace built ! I found my trusty slave  
Absconded, nothing done, my treasure used

Like rubbish ; and I found my brother dying.  
I thought it mere unreasonable misfortune,  
That first my pride was given mockery  
To feast on, then my love calamity :  
If chance strike once haphazard, why not twice ?  
I would not think, all this was my own doing ;  
I durst not see, that having once committed  
My wilful folly to the merciless  
Mechanical logic of events, I had  
In one result contrived my own disgrace,  
And killed my brother.

Physician. You may be sure of this :  
Not half the cause of what a man effects  
Is what he does ; the rest is pure mischance.  
Action is always haunted : do what we please,  
A fiend slips in to mind the mischief in it.  
So here. Certainly when your runner brought us,  
Down in the city yonder, your great news  
Of mutiny overcome, but brought besides  
Breath of the rumor he had travelled through—  
As one who has past through wild fire in the jungle  
Comes with the smell of noisome smoke upon him—  
The flaring story how day after day  
Your Jew was gorging thousands of the people,  
Any vile rabble that might herd about him,  
As free to make your wealth their gluttony  
As forest pigs a windfall of wild plums :  
Certainly then Gad sicken'd in his anger  
Like a man poisoned. But this askt no more  
Than vengeance to be cured ; and fiercely Gad

Set out to take it. But the seeds of death  
Are everywhere, scatter'd perpetually,  
Lodging invisibly, and quick to prosper  
Wherever troubled life gives broken ground  
For their fertility. Some deadly seed  
Fasten'd in the vexation of Gad's nature :  
Corrupting there so lustily, the whole man  
Was drawn into its blazing growth before  
Our journey had well begun. All the way here  
His flesh consumed in fever, and his mind  
In rage against your Jew. No pause by day  
For rest or bait, no camping for the night ;  
But night and day relays of litter-bearers,—  
Weeping with sweat at noon, and stumbling on  
Through darkness as the trotting linkmen's flares  
Made rapid shadows cross the crimson ground,—  
Must groan and strain to keep the pelting pace  
He cried for, only living to enjoy  
His justice on the spoilers of the wealth  
That should have beautified the world for you.  
But that insatiable flourishing of disease  
Devoured him to the end, both flesh and mind.  
Parcht like a mummy, nothing alive in him  
But a passionless whisper of " Bring me the Jew !  
Where is the Jew ? " repeated and repeated,  
We laid him here to die. But though we had  
From dawn the camp surrounded, the slippery Jew  
Escaped us.  
*Gundaphorus.* But I will have him yet, or else  
Never again will I be called a king.

*Physician.* We caught the merchant, though.  
*Gundaphorus.* Bring him me here.

They brought Abbanes fetter'd ; and the king  
Some moments lookt at him without a word,  
And then spoke quietly ; but his eyes burned.

*Gundaphorus.* Why has your friend deserted you ?  
*Abbanes.* My friend ?

Querer friendship, his. But truly I never thought  
The man would bolt.

*Gundaphorus.* No ? What was the plan, then ?  
*Abbanes.* My plan, when there is nothing to be done,

Is always this : do nothing.

*Gundaphorus.* But you were here  
. To overlook the work of him you sold ?

*Abbanes.* So I did overlook him, like a man  
In the top of a tree who overlooks the work  
Of a rogue elephant among the crops.

*Gundaphorus.* What, so unmanageable was the slave ?  
*Abbanes.* You had put everything into his hands.

*Gundaphorus.* Tell me, do you remember well the day  
You sold him me ?

*Abbanes.* I do.

*Gundaphorus.* And what I said ?—  
“ We'll keep the merchant till his ware is proved ;  
If he has swindled us, we'll crucify him ” ?

*Abbanes.* Yes ; and if I had thought you would say that  
You never would have had the chance to buy him.

*Gundaphorus.* You knew him faulty ? Then why did you sell him ?

*Abbanes.* Well, I'd been fooled myself : I'd paid for him.

*Gundaphorus.* How fooled ?

*Abbanes.* First, that I had it in my head I was bound to bring you a carpenter ; and next, That he was one.

*Gundaphorus.* You scoundrel, was he not ?

*Abbanes.* No more than I'm a farmer.

*Gundaphorus.* Yet you bought him ?

*Abbanes.* That was a trick to get him shipt to India. His master workt it on me.

*Gundaphorus.* What was this master ?

*Abbanes.* Head of a mystery. You know the sort : Inventors who have reason'd out new gods ; They preach, and gather colleges, and send Gospellers out. This Thomas was to give Some god to India.

*Gundaphorus.* Did he this ?

*Abbanes.* Not he : As much good he has been to you or me As to his master.

*Gundaphorus.* What is it he has done ?

*Abbanes.* The people here were starving when we came ; Now they are fat.

*Gundaphorus.* Feasted on my money !

Well, I have you at least. You sold the slave ; You were put here to oversee his duty ; And now you answer for it.

*Abbanes.* Yes. There has been

Bad luck on me in this deal from first to last.  
*Gundaphorus.* The last is still to come.

But from the door  
Noise like the scuffle of contending men,  
And the indignant tone of words that seemed  
Forbidding someone, now broke off their talk :  
Thomas came in, and after him the guards  
Whom he had put aside ; and from their looks  
It could be seen they were afraid to hold him.  
For one keen instant, what the soldiers feared  
*Gundaphorus* knew, in the startling of his heart  
As Thomas faced him : but soon recollected  
His anger and his wrongs, and who he was.

*Gundaphorus.* My trusty slave ? They told me you had  
.. escaped.

*Thomas.* But now I have come back.

*Gundaphorus.* Well, it is true  
My hunters would have run you down at last.  
Look there ! (And the king pointed to the bed.)  
I would have ransackt the whole earth for you.

Thomas lookt gravely where the dead man lay ;  
Then, altering not a muscle in his regard,  
Gravely lookt at the king.

*Thomas.* Is it the prince,  
Your brother ?

*Gundaphorus.* This was not what you thought to find  
When you came back—was it to fawn for mercy ?—

Not this, and the justice I will have for this !

*Thomas.* No. Yet I might have known the man would die :  
He was against me.

*Gundaphorus.* And is against you still :

A dreadful adversary now you'll find him.—

But I am curious why you have come back.

*Thomas.* You had Abbanes in your hands.

*Gundaphorus.* I have

Abbanes in my hands ; and my hands know

What to do with him.

*Thomas.* But the guilt is here,

In me : none of it his, it is all mine.

*Gundaphorus.* I think nothing of that. The prince is dead ;  
One man I had on whom that could be wreakt :  
Now I have two.—Why did you take my money ?  
You never thought of building : why did you take  
The money that I meant to use so nobly,  
And waste it upon beggars ?

*Thomas.* But they were starving.

*Gundaphorus.* Starving ? And who but they had been the  
worse

If they'd all starved to death ? What I intended  
Would have increast the spirit of mankind  
In riches and delight : and this you have  
Destroyed. But answer me : you did not know  
Famine was here, nor how these wretched peasants  
Would worship you for flinging them my money :  
Why take it at the first ?

*Thomas.* I know why now :

To feed your starving people.

*Gundaphorus.* And rob me !

*Thomas.* 'Twas not for me to say what I must do  
And what refuse. No liking or misliking,  
Honesty or dishonesty for me :  
The thing I saw I had to do, I did.

*Gundaphorus.* And was it nothing that I trusted you ?

*Thomas.* Nothing : but that it was so, bitterly  
I could have hated--O and much besides !

*Gundaphorus.* Was there no reason at all in what you did ?

*Thomas.* Reason ! Excellent reason—but not mine,  
Nor yours, I think. I came to India  
Against all reason : and you gave your palace  
Into my charge, clean against all reason.  
What should I make of this ? What part for me  
But to accept ?—However the road went,  
Straight on or roundabout or leading nowhere,  
So it was at my feet plain open road,  
It was the road for me.

*Gundaphorus.* And now where are you,  
Now you have gone to the end of it ?

*Thomas.* Where I can  
Give you what I should think a king would count  
Very great gain.

*Gundaphorus.* What have I gained by you ?

*Thomas.* Your people, who were miserable, ate happy.

*Gundaphorus.* Have I gained that ? It is what I have  
lost,

My palace ! Never shall I now bestow  
The beauty I had thought of on the world !  
And you it was, though in pretence you spoke,

Showed me, like blowing to clear flame a spark,  
How every purpose that accomplishes  
The beauty that is now, lives on in man  
Creating beauty that shall be for ever.

*Thomas.* I only said what I was given to say,  
As afterwards I did what I was given.  
But I know now, time will not bring to man  
His perfect beauty. If it can be at all,  
Its immortality is on us now.

*Gundaphorus.* Did you learn this by squandering my  
wealth  
On mangy peasants ?

*Thomas.* Everything I have,  
I have from them.

*Gundaphorus.* And chief of all the things  
You have from them is this: you killed my brother.

*Thomas.* If that be true, then one man's death has paid  
For many lives.

*Gundaphorus.* The price is not complete;  
It shall be three men now.—You must have known,  
Even while your villagers were hailing you  
Deliverer, and stroking their full bellies,  
It would be death for you, when I found you out ?  
Did you not think of that ?

*Thomas.* I cannot remember.—  
Why, of a thing so plain I must have thought ;  
But I would scarcely notice thinking it.  
What else could be ?—If I had not seen that,  
It would have counted nothing, what I did.

*Gundaphorus.* Do you despise your life ?

*Thomas.*

Despise my life ?

Not what my life is now, now here I stand  
At the end of life. If it were mine to say,  
I would not lose the least regarded moment  
Of my life here, of being part of the earth,  
So lovely now to me, nay, now by me  
Adorable, every color and sound  
And motion of my fortune to belong  
So finely to its exquisite commonwealth.  
But think, when man loves woman, how he longs  
Not merely the beloved face to worship,  
To enjoy her body and delight in her mind,  
But to possess the spirit he divines  
Beyond his love, the spirit these disguise.  
And it will be the spirit of the life  
I love, that I shall enter when I die.

*Gundaphorus.* If you are still yourself, after your death !

*Thomas.* Myself ! myself ! what care I for myself  
Here or hereafter ? I am beyond all that.—  
But it is indescribable, what life  
Has now to me become. Enough for you,  
The man who took your wealth and wasted it  
On beggars, stands before you to be judged.

“ The prince ! Look at the prince ! ” a voice cried out,  
The high and frighten’d accent of it striking  
Sharp as metallic sound into their brains :  
“ The prince ! he moves his hand ! he is lifting his hand !  
Look ! And I heard him sigh for breath ! ”—“ You  
fool,”

Muttering deep and rough Mardes replied,  
" It was some wavering of the torches made  
A flicker in the shadows."

But it was true :  
Before them all, fixt as they turned to gaze,  
The dead man raised his hand and beckon'd with it.  
Into the mask of death there came again  
Living emotion : and clear and low he spoke.

*Gad.* Send for the king ! O quick, quick ! Send for him !  
*Gundaphorus.* Gad, I am here ! Gad, I am close beside you,

Kneeling here, it is I who hold your hand.

*Gad.* Give me this last thing now, Gundaphorus.

*Gundaphorus.* O live, live, and what will I not give you ?

*Gad.* Living or dead, I beseech you, give me

What I shall ask.

*Gundaphorus.* O Gad, what can I give you ?

*Gad.* Swear you will give it me.

*Gundaphorus.* Yes, yes, I swear.

*Gad.* Swear it is mine ; swear you will not refuse

When you know what I ask, and take it back.

*Gundaphorus.* It is yours, yours : what is it you woul  
have ?

*Gad.* Give me your palace.

*Gundaphorus.* What ?

*Gad.* You have sworn to it !

Give me the palace which the Hebrew slave

Has built for you.

*Gundaphorus.* O Gad, you do not know !

There is no palace.

*Gad.* I tell you I have seen it !

And you have given it to me.

*Gundaphorus.* You have seen it ?

*Gad.* I was alone, and weeping for misery and loneliness,  
Lost in a most desolate place ; neither light nor darkness  
Nor any other creature : nothing but my misery  
Motionless, forlorn, where time and change abandon'd me,  
Existence deserted me, all but my own unending  
Lonely lamentation, unseen, unheard, forsaken.

I said, If only I could be increasing agony,

O how I would bless it, not to be the same for ever !

And when my timeless anguish had been like ten thousand  
years,

I was answer'd, Thy wretchedness by this shall be increast,  
That thou shalt see what loveliness of bliss might have  
been thine,

Hadst thou bespoken there, where all ages and all worlds  
Are one everlasting community, thy dwelling.

And I beheld a palace ; and I was, as I beheld,  
The joy of the structure of its beauty, as in delight  
Of music a man's mind becomes the music he delights  
in.

I was the shining, the carving, the shapeliness

I loved to behold : but only a beholder,

Permitted for a moment ! And who could be the owner,  
I askt, of such a palace ? Whose habitation ?

Then I was answer'd, Gundaphorus thy brother

Has had this built for him : his Hebrew slave has built it :  
He has not seen it yet, nor knows how beautiful it is.

Then I, Let me go to him ! Release me, for he loves me :

Let me go back to the life of earth again  
And beseech him till he gives me his palace to be mine.-  
And mine it is : I have  
Your oath that it is mine.  
For this they let me come to you again.  
Tempt not my love, that now  
Lives with the power in things,  
To change to wrath if you revoke your word.

And instantly, like blowing out a lantern,  
Out of him went the life : out of his face  
The imploring passion, out of all his limbs  
The tension ; and again upon the bed  
A dead man lay, imperturbable flesh.

But the king, kneeling still, stared up at Thomas  
And yearned to cry to him ; but his mind could make  
No language and his breath no voice, like one  
Who strives to live after the stroke of thunder.  
And taller than a man the Thomas seemed  
Who now with more than presence of a man  
Glowed down on him, saying—but not to him :  
Rather as one who looks down on the child  
Concerning whom he speaks—“ O Master, now  
I understand ! At last I understand !  
Not to be mine thou gavest me my heaven,  
But to make this man thine—all India thine  
Under the favor of his high example !  
Thus shall the work be done which seemed to fail ;  
So that shall have no end which I supposed

Had come to end in me."

Then in his voice  
Commandment spoke, and seemed to speak divinely :  
"Gundaphorus, you have heard it from your dead  
What I have done : yes ! I have built the palace.  
Stand up : when I have shown it to you, then  
It will be time to kneel."

As if that word  
Release him, eagerly sprang the king upright  
And threw his arms out-stretcht to Thomas, crying  
"Givē me my brother back to life again ! "

*Thomas.* O no !

Gad now has enter'd the perfection of death.  
Not to disturb the safety of dead men  
Was I sent here, but to make living men  
Secure in life as Gad is now in death.

*Gundaphorus.* And what, to be like the dead, must we who  
live

Receive from you ?

*Thomas.* A gift which is to life  
What life is to the flesh : for you shall live  
Where Gad is now.

*Gundaphorus.* In the palace you have built ?  
O tell me what it is ! Can living eyes  
Light on it ?

*Thomas.* All the sense and mind and zeal  
Of life shall dwell there.

*Gundaphorus.* Nay, how can it now  
Ever be mine, now on my oath to Gad

I have given it away ?

*Thomas.* It is yours still.

Gad in his death beheld the kingdom of heaven,  
And there your palace. But the kingdom of heaven  
Is for the living also ; and where it is,  
Your palace stands. Enter me, and find it !  
Your palace is in me ; for now in me  
Life is the kingdom of heaven. Become my life,  
And be the lord of the palace I have built.

*Gundaphorus.* What is your life ?

*Thomas.* A palace made of souls.

*Gundaphorus.* A palace made of souls ? Then that was  
true !

*Thomas.* And it is yours : you have the right to it.  
You were the cause of it ; you trusted me :  
Out of the charity that fed your people  
And had their blessing, have I built the palace :  
Beauty which whosoever shall behold,  
He shall become the beauty he beholds.

*Gundaphorus.* And you can show it to me ?

*Thomas.* If I can show you  
What it is to be living in this world !—  
But to learn that, my Master you must learn :  
It is the life he gave me you must enter.—

Who has not felt, though it might be no more  
Than shadow of a phantom at high noon,  
The shuddering thought, If it were possible  
This life of mine should be a soul alone,  
The momentary spangle in the dark  
Of its own useless littleness of light !—

This is the furthest end of misery  
Life can look to ; and the most blessed life  
Is the most opposite : spirit which lives  
Divining everywhere perceiving spirit,  
The answer to itself ; which as it knows  
Itself experience the whole world gives,  
Knows that itself is to the whole world given.  
That man shall bless his life, who understands  
In everything that is the living creature,  
Experience that each by each is shaped  
As a crag shapes the moving of the waves  
About its base, and by the waves is shaped :  
A universe of lives, infinite world  
Of mutual structure of experience ;  
So to know this that in his life he dwells  
The conscious image of that universe  
Where each in all and all in each must live ;  
And loves to give the best exchange he can  
For what he takes ; and finds, the more he gives,  
The lovelier grows the world his life receives :  
Ever brighter the concourse in his soul  
Of the whole kind of creatures, ever more nobly  
In one majestic architecture made,  
Ever more glorifying the soul that lives  
Imaging all this beauty ; until he says,  
This is the Kingdom of God, and what am I  
Who dwell in it ?—Then into himself he looks,  
And round the central splendor of his soul  
Perceives what boundless region thence expands,  
Darkening into terrible distances :

Yes, and far off, ghosts of abomination,  
And mysteries of evil threatening him  
Ten times more fearful than the world could be  
Before he loved it. Dreading then himself,  
Outward again he turns his mind to look  
Upon his kingdom, land and sea and stars,  
Flowers and beasts and men—the lovely world  
Like anguish strikes its loveliness into him ;  
He is the beauty he sees ; and suddenly knows  
The two infinities that make the world—  
Infinite number of spirits in their life  
Of power on one another, and each spirit  
Infinite substance : the kingdom and the king !  
Then, feeling himself one substance with all being,  
Again he looks within : and instantly  
Consumes in his own soul's unthinkable  
Immense of light ; and for one heavenly moment,  
Himself the kingdom and himself the king,  
He is the glory of God and God in his glory.  
The moment ends : but like perpetual dawn  
He lives thereafter ; the palace where he dwells,  
This structure of the souls of all the world,  
Instinct, like early morning air with gleam  
Of rose and beryl, hyacinth and silver,  
With the continual morrow of the king  
Returning to his kingdom.

*Gundaphorus.*                                    And how shall I  
Become this life, and such a gift receive ?  
*Thomas.* It shall be given as you give yourself :  
Of which let music be the parable.

Beautiful is the sound of strings and pipes ;  
More beautiful the melody in the mind  
Made of the sound ; most beautiful of all,  
Voices of viols and harps, trumpets and flutes,  
~~Dulcimers~~, horns, consenting one with another,  
And melodies in these voices each on each  
Conferring grace, each its own loveliness  
Elaborating in concord with the rest,  
All to achieve one perfect amplitude  
Of manifold music, a single dignity  
Of shapely intellectual delight.

But only as the listener gives himself  
In spiritual understanding to it,  
The charm of sense-enchanted instruments  
Can give his mind their melody, his soul  
The beautiful congress of their melodies.

Make this your parable of the world, and take  
Me for the witness : teeming India  
At first in mere detestable confusion  
Smote on me overwhelming, as on a man  
Escaped from shipwreck, just as he wades ashore,  
The suffocating downfall of a wave  
Huger than all the danger he has past.  
It seemed the insane invention of a fiend,  
This Indian lust of self-devouring life :  
Yet it was but my horror of the darkness  
In my own soul, looking forth and finding  
Its horrible black answer in the world.  
And when I gave myself to serve the world  
And love the horror of it (for so had done

My Master, and so, for love of him, must I)  
My mind was quicken'd into shining power  
That could encounter with the tyrannous world.  
Even what I most abhorred, this India ;  
And, as if music crystallized in fire,  
The world became a palace for my soul.  
And then the miracle ! I loved myself !  
Ay, for I lived in beauty which to know  
Is to become : the pest of wicked ghosts  
That haunted round about my soul was killed  
As light twilight illusion kills, when all  
The world was mine, and I was all the world's.  
For then I knew myself that heavenly substance  
Which the dead are, to which all past event  
Returns immortal, taking its delight  
Here to be life, and to behold itself :  
This world is its beholding of itself.  
So life can see the glory which we are,  
And for one lightning moment whose the glory ;  
But in that moment is the life of life :  
To be the kingdom is to be the king,  
And we are justified in our existence.  
Now therefore what my Master made my life  
I will make yours : his word shall be your mind,  
Your will shall be the meaning of his word.  
And you shall find that when you love the world  
As he requires of you, you have your palace ;  
And having that—O then for you there comes  
The miracle of this world : you love yourself.  
But what that means you cannot now conceive.

~~Gundaphorus.~~ You are to be the master here, and I  
Simple obedience : so far at least  
Ammonishing me, Gad's message I can read.  
In you your Master is mine. But something still  
I am : I am the king of India ;  
And like the shadow of my humility  
Before you now, all India to receive  
Your Master waits.

*Abbanes.* Then, in this turn of things,  
Have I my freedom ?

*Gundaphorus.* Have I your forgiveness ?—  
Undo his chains !—Your freedom ? Ask me all  
The honor you can think of, it is yours.  
Great shall be now your part in our new life.

*Abbanes.* Let me get back to my ship ; let me be sailing.  
There's no new life ~~at~~ sea, and never will be,  
And I want none : I'm a sea-faring man.  
Give me again bright weather and fresh wind,  
And the green water that my prow treads white  
Leaping on board in rainbows—I'll forget  
You landsmen yearning for the life of life.

*Thomas.* Yes, let him go. He knows not what he is.  
He has the secret native in his heart,  
Which the sea and the wind have in their motion,  
And the sun in its shining.—But, *Abbanes*,  
Remember me sometimes. At white midnight,  
In fair midsea, when all the ship's asleep  
But you and those small chirping friends of yours  
Making their merriment—will you not then  
little think of me ? For if you do,

I promise you, you shall feel strangely happy :  
You will feel blessing you my gratitude,  
That all your life will follow where you go  
Like a devoted spirit, quick at the least  
Thought of me, to be sweetness in your mind.

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